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ABSTRACT

This comprehensive handbook contains accreditation materials of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Institutions of Higher Education. These include the general institutional requirements, the criteria for accreditation, and new policies on institutional change. The chapters are: (1) "Introduction to Voluntary Accreditation and the Commission"; (2) "Affiliation with the Commission" (forms, institutional obligations, sanctions, record of status and scope); (3) "The General Institutional Requirements" (including purpose and relationship with the Criteria); (4) "The Criteria for Accreditation" (working with the patterns of evidence, the five Criteria, and focus sections on each); (5) "Institutional Evaluation for Improvement"; (6) "Peer Review as a Form of Evaluation and Self Regulation"; (7) "Logistics for Evaluation Visits" (institutional and team preparations, conducting the visit); (8) "The Team Report and Recommendation" (audiences, writing responsibilities, report structure, preparation and submission); (9) "Review Processes and Commission Action"; (10) "The Evaluation Process: Charts, Time Lines, Samples"; (11) "Other Monitoring Visits" (focused evaluations, special cases); (12) "Institutional Change" (definition, evaluation); (13) "The Commission's Candidacy Program"; (14) "Special Focus: Assessing Student Academic Achievement"; and (15) "Informing the Public." Extensive appendixes contain rules of procedure, resources on higher education topics, regional accrediting bodies, state agencies, and information on the Commission including offices and staff, calendar, publication, terminology and common abbreviations. Includes an index and an index of policies. (JB)

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Handbook of Accreditation

1994-96

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Handbook of Accreditation

1994-96

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North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education

Chicago, Illinois

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Handbook of Accreditation

1994-96

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Table of Contents

Preface xi

1 Introduction to Voluntary Accreditation and the Commission 1

Voluntary Accreditation 1

Institutional Accreditation 1

Specialized Accreditation 1

The North Central Association 1

The Commission on Institutions of Higher Education 2

A Brief History of the Commission 2

The Mission of the Commission 4

The Commission Staff and Services 5

Relations with Governmental Agencies 6

2 Affiliation with the Commission 7

Forms of Affiliation 7

Candidacy Status 7

Accreditation Status 7

Institutional Withdrawal of Application for Affiliation 7

Institutional Resignation from Affiliation 8

Commission Reconsideration of Affiliation 8

Commission Withdrawal of Affiliation 8

Debts to the Commission 8

Appeal of a Commission Decision to Deny or Withdraw Affiliation 9

Institutional Obligations of Affiliation 9

The Periodic Review Cycle 9

Reports 9

Focused Evaluations 10

Institutional Annual Reports 10

Payment of Dues and Fees 10

Sanctions 11

Memorandum for the Record 11

Probation 11

The Record of Status and Scope 12
The Statement of Affiliation Status (SAS) 12
The Statement of Institutional Scope and Activities (SISA) 12
A Sample RSS 13
The Role of the RSS in the Evaluation Process 13

3 The General Institutional Requirements 19

Purpose of the General Institutional Requirements 19
The Relationship between the GIRs and the Explication 19
The Relationship between the GIRs and the Preliminary Information Form 19

The General Institutional Requirements 20

The Relationship between the GIRs and the Criteria 27

4 The Criteria for Accreditation 29

Working with the Patterns of Evidence 29
The Introduction of the Patterns of Evidence 29
The Criteria and the Patterns in the Accreditation Process 30
What Patterns and Indicators Mean for Institutions 30
What Patterns and Indicators Mean for Evaluation Teams 31
Contexts Shaping the Patterns of Evidence 32
Conclusion 32

The Criteria for Accreditation 33

Focus on Criterion One 36
Commission Definition of "Purposes" and "Consistent" 36
Commission Meaning of "Appropriate to an Institution of Higher Education" 36
The Role of "Stated Purposes" in the Accreditation Process 36
Institutional Self-Study and Team Evaluation for This Criterion 37
Pattern of Evidence Supporting This Criterion 37
Other Types of Evidence Appropriate for This Criterion 38
Weighing Types of Evidence in Determining Whether This Criterion Is Met 38

Focus on Criterion Two 39
Commission Meaning of "Effectively Organized" 39
Commission Meaning of "Necessary" 40
The Role of Resources and Their Organization in the Accreditation Process 41
Institutional Self-Study and Team Evaluation for This Criterion 41
Pattern of Evidence Supporting This Criterion 42
Other Types of Evidence Appropriate for This Criterion 43
Weighing Types of Evidence in Determining Whether This Criterion Is Met 43

Focus on Criterion Three 44
Commission Meaning of "Educational Purposes" 44
Commission Meaning of "Other Purposes" 44
The Role of Assessment in This Criterion 45
The Role of General Education in This Criterion 45
The Role of Accomplishment of Purposes in the Accreditation Process 46
Institutional Self-Study and Team Evaluation for This Criterion 47
Pattern of Evidence Supporting This Criterion 48
Other Types of Evidence Appropriate for This Criterion 49
Weighing Types of Evidence in Determining Whether This Criterion Is Met 50

Focus on Criterion Four 50
Commission Meaning of "Can Continue to Accomplish its Purposes" 50
Commission Meaning of "Strengthening Educational Effectiveness" 50
The Role of Institutional Planning in This Criterion 51
The Role of "Strengthening Educational Effectiveness" in the Accreditation Process 51
Institutional Self-Study and Team Evaluation for This Criterion 52
Pattern of Evidence Supporting This Criterion 52
Other Types of Evidence Appropriate for This Criterion 53
Weighing Types of Evidence in Determining Whether This Criterion Is Met 53

Focus on Criterion Five 54
Commission Meaning of "Integrity" 54
Commission Meaning of "Practices and Relationships" 54
The Role of Diversity and Equity in This Criterion 55
The Role of Institutional Integrity in the Accreditation Process 56
Statements of Good Practice Promulgated by Other Organizations 56
Institutional Self-Study and Team Evaluation for This Criterion 56
Pattern of Evidence Supporting This Criterion 58
Other Types of Evidence Appropriate for This Criterion 59
Weighing Types of Evidence in Determining Whether This Criterion Is Met 60

Chapter Reference A. Principles of Good Practice: A Resource Guide 61

Chapter Reference B. Policy Guidelines for Refund of Student Charges 65

5 Institutional Evaluation for Improvement 69

The Self-Study Process in Accreditation 69
Purposes of Self-Study in Accreditation 69
What the Commission Expects in Every Self-Study 69
Preparing for and Conducting the Self-Study 70

The Self-Study Report 74
The Purposes of the Self-Study Report 74

The Audiences for the Self-Study Report ... 74
The Structure of the Self-Study Report ... 74
The General Institutional Requirements in the Self-Study Report ... 77

Other Materials Required for the Evaluation ... 77
Materials Sent to the Evaluation Team and the Commission Staff Liaison ... 77
Materials Available to the Evaluation Team on Campus ... 77

The "Special Emphases" Self-Study Option ... 78
Purpose of the Special Emphases Option ... 78
Determining Whether an Institution Should Do a Special Emphases Self-Study ... 79
Staff Approval of the Special Emphases Self-Study ... 79
Selecting the Areas of Focus ... 79
The Special Emphases Self-Study Report ... 79
Special Emphases Evaluation Teams ... 80

6 Peer Review as a Form of Evaluation and Self-Regulation ... 81

Peer Review in the Evaluation Process ... 81

The Consultant-Evaluator Corps ... 81
The Role and Responsibilities of Consultant-Evaluators ... 81
C-Es as "Generalists" rather than Specialists ... 82
Expectations of Evaluation Teams ... 82
Experience and Training of the Consultant-Evaluator Corps ... 84
Terms of Service for Consultant-Evaluators ... 84
The Team Chair Corps ... 85
Scheduling Visits and Team Invitations ... 85
Avoiding Conflict of Interest ... 86
Consultant-Evaluators and Outside Consulting ... 86

Other Roles of Consultant-Evaluators ... 87
Accreditation Review Council Members ... 87
Commissioners ... 87
Association Appeals Panel ... 87

Joining the Consultant-Evaluator Corps ... 88

7 Logistics for Evaluation Visits ... 89

Institutional Preparations for the Evaluation Visit ... 89
Initiating the Evaluation Process ... 89
Choosing the Dates for the Visit ... 89
Rescheduling the Evaluation Visit ... 90
The Selection of the Evaluation Team ... 90

The Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet 90
Observers 91
Logistical Arrangements 91
Budgeting for the Evaluation Process 91
Materials for the Evaluation Process 92
Announcing the Visit 92
Making the Most of the Evaluation Visit 92

Team Preparations for the Visit 93
Establishing Lines of Communication 93
Planning for the Visit 93
Analyzing the Materials for the Visit 93
The Commission Staff's Role during the Team Visit 95
Team Expenses 95

Conducting the Evaluation Visit 95
Length of the Evaluation Visit 95
The First Team Meeting 96
Meetings with the Executive Officer 97
Data Gathering and Evaluation 97
Team Meetings 98
The Exit Session 98

8 The Team Report and Recommendation 101

Audiences for the Team Report 101

Writing Responsibilities for the Report 101

Structure of the Team Report 101
Section I: The Introduction 102
Section II: Evaluation for Affiliation 102
Section III: Observations and Suggestions for Institutional Improvement 103
Section IV: The Team Recommendation and Rationale 105

Preparing and Submitting the Team Report 105
The Draft Team Report 105
Response to the Draft Team Report 106
The Final Team Report 106

9 Review Processes and Commission Action 107

Review Processes Leading to Commission Action 107
Institutional Response to the Team Report 107
Choosing the Appropriate Review Process 107

Table of Contents

The Readers' Panel Process 108
The Review Committee Process 109
Institution and Team Response to the Review Committee Recommendations 110

Commission Action 110

10 The Evaluation Process: Charts, Time Lines, Samples 111

A Sample Timeline for the Evaluation Process 111
An Overview of the Evaluation Process 114
Materials for the Evaluation Process 118
A Planning Checklist for the Team Chairperson 119
A Sample SAS Worksheet 120
A Sample Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet 122
Commission Fee Schedule for 1994-95 Evaluation Processes 123

11 Other Monitoring Visits 125

Focused Evaluations 125

Institutional Report for a Commission-Mandated Focused Evaluation 125
Institutional Report for a Focused Evaluation for Institutional Change 125
Team Preparations for a Focused Evaluation 126
Review Processes and Commission Action 127

Special Cases 127

Pre-Visits 127
Sequential Visits 128
Interregional Visits 128
Joint Visits 128
Generalist Visits 129
Confirmation/Advisory Visits 129
International Visits 129

Chapter Reference. Principles of Good Practice in Overseas International Education Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals 130

12 Institutional Change 135

Defining Institutional Change 135

Commission Policies Regarding Institutional Dynamics 135

Evaluating Institutional Change 138

Timing the Submission of a Request for Institutional Change 138
Information and Documentation to Support a Request for Institutional Change 138
Processes for Approval of Change Requests 141

13 The Commission's Candidacy Program 143

Preliminary Information Form (PIF) Process 143

Procedure for Submitting a PIF 143
Staff Analysis of the PIF 143

Overview of the Candidacy Program 144

Deciding between Initial Candidacy and Initial Accreditation 144
Commission Meaning of "Basic Institutional Structure and Strength" 146
Commission Meaning of "Forthrightness and Integrity" 146
Commission Expectations of the Institution's Potential "to Fulfill Its Plans" 146
Commission Expectations of a "Timetable" 147
Institutional Preparation of the Self-Study Report 147
Relationship of the Plan and Timetable to the Biennial Review Process 147
Commission Meaning of "Emerging Pattern of Evidence" 148
The Team Report in the Candidacy Program 148

14 Special Focus: Assessing Student Academic Achievement 151

The Commission's Assessment Initiative 151

How the Assessment Initiative Relates to the Criteria for Accreditation 152
Hallmarks of Successful Programs to Assess Student Academic Achievement 152
Timetable for Implementation of the Assessment Initiative 154
Why the Commission Emphasizes the Assessment Plan 155
Five Evaluative Questions for Assessment Plans 156

The Assessment Plan Review Process 156

Format Requirements for the Written Plan to be Submitted to the APR Process 156

Evaluation Team Review of the Assessment Plan 157

How Teams Respond to an Institution's Progress on Assessment 157

15 Informing the Public 159

The Commission's Expanding View of Public Disclosure 159

Commission Disclosure 159

Publication of Affiliation by the Commission 159
Sharing Information with Other Agencies 159
Public Distribution of the Team Report by the Commission 160
Public Disclosure Notice 160

Institutional Disclosure 160

Publication of Affiliation by the Institution 160
Institutional Advertising 161

Table of Contents

Public Distribution of the Team Report by the Institution 161
Publication of Commission Action by the Institution 161
Complaints against Affiliated Institutions 162

Appendices 163

A. Rules of Procedure of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education 163
B. Resources on Topics in Higher Education 168
C. Regional Accrediting Bodies 175
D. State Agencies in the North Central Region 176
E. The Commission 179
F. The Commission Offices and Staff 180
G. The Professional Staff of the Commission 181
H. The Commission Calendar 183
I. Publications Available from the Commission 184
J. Glossary of Commission Terminology 185
K. List of Commonly Used Abbreviations 188

Index of Commission Policies 189

Index 193

Preface

The North Central Association's Commission on Institutions of Higher Education publishes and periodically revises its essential documents to provide current information about the Commission's policies and practices relating to accreditation and institutional improvement to institutional representatives, evaluators, and all those who are interested in the work of the Commission.

The *Handbook of Accreditation, 1994-96,* is distinctive on several counts. It represents staff efforts made over an extended period of time to incorporate the Commission's revised General Institutional Requirements, Criteria for Accreditation, candidacy program, and change policies approved in August 1992, to become effective September 1, 1994. We published draft documents for the 1993 and 1994 Annual Meetings and asked for comments from those who used them. Staff also achieved a longtime goal of incorporating into a single publication the materials previously issued in three separate documents. Responding to favorable comments from the draft handbooks, we also made the handbook a full-size document. Through the format and print, we have attempted to make the handbook "user-friendly," with information clearly identified and readily available. We hope that all who use the handbook will find it helpful, and we welcome suggestions for improvement of future editions.

The *Handbook of Accreditation, 1994-96,* is published in the North Central Association's centennial year, at a time when both the Commission and its institutions face two significant challenges. One is the potential impact of the Higher Education Act Amendments 1992 and the regulations implementing the Act that became effective in July 1994. The Commission's intention is to continue to focus on current Commission policies, requirements, and criteria as effective means already in place to provide certification of educational quality and institutional integrity. While we must incorporate into our activities some compliance tasks (such as unannounced site inspections) that the Commission is required to assume for USDE recognition, our intention is to separate these tasks to the greatest extent possible from the broader purposes of accreditation and to devise simple and reasonable ways to accomplish them.

Another challenge is the impact of those changes that will come about as the regional accrediting commissions work with representatives of Washington-based higher education associations, through the National Policy Board on Higher Education Institutional Accreditation, to create a new national structure to ensure quality in higher education through periodic recognition and evaluation of accrediting associations. A significant aspect of this effort is the work by the regional accrediting commissions to develop common eligibility requirements to be adopted by each regional accrediting commission as well as core standards to which all regionals will conform. Members of our staff have served on the committee that is developing these requirements and standards, and we know that everything proposed is consistent with our own General Institutional Requirements and Criteria.

With all the external challenges to institutional quality and integrity, we believe it is essential for all of the regionals to move toward common expectations for all institutions, while maintaining the uniqueness of each region.

Even as we respond to these two challenges, the staff present this handbook to our institutions and evaluators with confidence that the requirements, criteria, and policies offered here will continue to be valid over time for certifying institutional quality and integrity. We believe, too, that the handbook will offer great assistance to institutions in their continuing improvement.

Please call or write the Commission staff if you have questions about the information in the handbook or if we can assist you in any way.

Patricia A. Thrash
Executive Director

November 1, 1994

1 Introduction to Voluntary Accreditation and the Commission

VOLUNTARY ACCREDITATION

Voluntary accreditation of educational institutions, as carried out by the various accrediting bodies, is a uniquely American process. Accreditation is sought voluntarily by institutions and is conferred by non-governmental bodies. Voluntary accreditation has two fundamental purposes: quality assurance and institutional and program improvement. There are two types of voluntary accreditation of educational institutions: institutional accreditation and specialized accreditation.

☐ Institutional Accreditation

Institutional accreditation evaluates an entire institution and accredits it as a whole. An institutional accrediting body evaluates more than the formal educational activities of an institution; it assesses as well such characteristics as governance and administration, financial stability, admissions and student personnel services, institutional resources, student academic achievement, institutional effectiveness, and relationships with constituencies outside the institution.

Several agencies provide institutional accreditation. Six regional—Middle States, New England, North Central, Northwest, Southern, and Western—and six national accrediting associations are institutional accrediting associations. While independent of one another, the six regional associations cooperate extensively and recognize one another's accreditation. The national institutional accrediting associations offer accreditation for institutions with particular religious purposes, private trade and technical schools, private business colleges, and colleges focusing on health-related fields, as well as institutions offering programs primarily through distance delivery and home study.

The Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools accredits a small number of institutions that also are affiliated with one or more other institutional accrediting associations. The Commission requires that these institutions describe themselves in identical terms to both associations in regard to purpose, governance, programs, degrees, diplomas, certificates, personnel, finances, and constituents. The Commission also requires that institutions inform it of any changes in status made by the other accrediting agency.

☐ Specialized Accreditation

Specific programs within an educational institution can also seek accreditation. This specialized (or program) accreditation evaluates particular units, schools, or programs within an institution and is often associated with national professional associations, such as those for engineering, medicine, or law, or with specific disciplines, such as business, education, psychology, or social work. Institutional accreditation is separate from the accreditation given or withheld by professional associations, although the Commission does take cognizance of the standards set by professional bodies. The Commission also requires affiliated institutions to inform it of significant changes in status with specialized agencies.

THE NORTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION

On March 29 and 30, 1895, 36 school, college, and university administrators from seven Midwestern states met at Northwestern University in response to an invitation signed by the presidents of the University of Chicago, the University of Michigan, Northwestern University, and the University of Wisconsin, and by the principals of Grand

Rapids High School, Michigan Military Academy, and the Michigan Normal School. They had been called to "organize, if deemed expedient, an association of colleges and schools of the North-Central States." The constitution of the association these educators formed stated that the North Central Association's object would be "the establishment of close relations between the colleges and secondary schools" of the region.

Within a short time, the desire to improve articulation between secondary schools and colleges led to extensive examination of the quality of education at both levels; that, in turn, led to the accreditation of secondary schools and, later, colleges and universities.

Two histories of the Association—Calvin O. Davis' *A History of the North Central Association* (1945) and Louis G. Geiger's *Voluntary Accreditation: A History of the North Central Association 1945-1970* (1970)—trace this evolution and chronicle the decisions and actions the Association has taken to provide educational leadership to the region and the country.

Today, the Association serves colleges and schools in 19 states—Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming—Department of Defense Schools operated overseas for the children of American military and civilian personnel, and Navajo Nation schools. Its day-to-day operations are conducted by its two Commissions: the **Commission on Schools,** located in Tempe, Arizona, which accredits institutions below the postsecondary degree-granting level; and the **Commission on Institutions of Higher Education,** in Chicago, Illinois, which accredits institutions of higher education.

In February 1991, a specially appointed Committee that included representatives of both Commissions began preparations for the Association centennial in 1995. A social history is currently being written in celebration of the centennial, with publication expected in fall 1995.

THE COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

☐ A Brief History of the Commission

Since it began accrediting higher education institutions in 1913, what is now known as the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools has tried both to reflect and to encourage progress in higher education. At first, institutions were measured against a set of standards. Some were quite explicit ("the college, if a corporate institution, shall possess a productive endowment of not less than $200,000"; "the college should limit the number of students in a recitation or laboratory class to thirty"); others were broader ("the college should be provided with adequate books in the library and laboratory equipment to develop and fully illustrate each course taught"). During the first decades of the century, such quantitative and prescriptive standards helped to bring some order to higher education.

But as early as 1921 President Henry Pratt Judson of the University of Chicago warned against the danger of excessive rigidity in the standards; and by the end of the twenties, critics charged that the standards had become roadblocks to legitimate experimentation and constructive change. The Association's college commission responded to these concerns by undertaking an exhaustive study of its accreditation process.

This reconsideration ended in a fundamental shift in the emphasis of the accreditation process that led the Commission to the principles that still guide it today. The concept of standardization was abandoned. Henceforth, the Association declared in 1934, an institution would be judged "on the basis of the total pattern it presents ... It is accepted as a principle of procedure that superiority in some characteristic may be regarded as compensating, to some extent, for deficiencies in other respects ... an institution will be judged in terms of the purposes it seeks to serve." Under this new approach, strengths were to be weighed against weaknesses to evaluate the "total pattern" of the institution. Before, it was assumed that all institutions had the same fundamental purposes; now, the increasing diversity of institutions was to be recognized. Each institution was to be judged in the light of its own self-declared purposes—as long as these were appropriate to a higher

education institution. "Standards" were replaced by "criteria"; "inspectors" became "examiners"; and the basis for accreditation decisions became a comparison of data concerning an institution against a set of "norms" derived from data accumulated from many institutions. The "pattern" of data from the institution being evaluated was compared to a "pattern map" based on these norms, and the institution was accredited if the two patterns seemed to match.

The normative technique was used until after World War II. It became apparent that the notion of standardization—the pressure to conform—was inherent in the very idea of norms. The idea of a norm assumes similarity; institutions could not be measured against a norm unless they were basically alike. But the 1934 principle accepted the fact that they were not alike. Moreover, using normative data to make evaluation decisions also conflicted with the principle that an institution was to be judged on the basis of its stated purposes. Further, in 1957 the Commission began a program of periodically reaffirming the accreditation of member institutions. As a consequence, a new emphasis was placed on institutional renewal and improvement.

In response to these developments, the Commission produced its *Guide for the Evaluation of Institutions of Higher Education* (1958). The *Guide* moved beyond the idea of norms and the pattern map to direct the attention of both institutions and Commission examiners to seven basic questions that were considered indicative of the areas that needed to be assessed in order to determine the quality of an educational institution (e.g., "What is the educational task of the institution?" "Are the necessary resources available for carrying out the task ... ?"; "Is student life on campus relevant to the institution's task?"). The focus of evaluation became more qualitative, less quantitative; and, as a result, the professional judgment of the Commission's examiners became proportionately more important in the evaluation decision. The *Guide* was in use in various editions until the early seventies, and many of the areas it addressed are still reflected in the current Criteria.

In the sixties and seventies, the Commission's membership increased both in size and variety. Community colleges, vocational-technical institutes, and specialized institutions assumed an increasing importance in American education; and the configurations of resources and organization appropriate to them were not always comparable to those traditionally found in four-year colleges and universities. The Commission joined the other regional postsecondary accrediting commissions in responding to these changes by adopting a set of "conditions for eligibility" in the early seventies; in effect, these conditions limited and described the kinds of postsecondary institutions the regional associations would accredit. Since the mid-seventies, when its *Handbook on Accreditation* first appeared, the Commission has increasingly emphasized the self-study process as both a procedure for gathering data for accreditation decisions *and* a means to institutional improvement.

In 1981, the Commission adopted the Criteria for Accreditation and Criteria for Candidacy for Accreditation, which incorporated and superseded all previous statements. In 1987, the Commission reformulated its General Institutional Requirements, which defined the essential characteristics of all its affiliated institutions. Criteria for Accreditation and General Institutional Requirements continue to serve as the basis for the accreditation process as it is currently conducted by the Commission.

Committed to continual review of the effectiveness of its work, the Commission in 1991-92 initiated a significant reexamination of its policies, procedures, requirements, criteria, and mission through a Committee on Critical Issues. Among the Committee's concerns were issues of consistency and fairness, the universe of institutions served, the promotion of quality higher education, and greater public awareness and understanding of the role and function of accreditation. The recommendations of the Committee were reviewed by the Commission and distributed to the member institutions for comment in Spring 1992. In a series of actions at its August and November 1992 and February 1993 meetings, the Commission adopted a new mission statement, revised Criteria for Accreditation and General Institutional Requirements, a new candidacy program, and major recasting of the policies on approval of institutional change and public disclosure. These developments resulted in the first major restructuring of the *Handbook of Accreditation* in more than ten years.

With the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act Amendments 1992 and the passage of regulations implementing the Act becoming effective July 1, 1994, the Commission once again faces significant challenges as it considers incorporation of the new requirements into its ongoing evaluation/accreditation activities.

The Mission of the Commission

The Commission adopted the following Statement of Mission on August 6, 1992:

History and Purpose

The Commission on Institutions of Higher Education is part of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The Association was founded in 1895 as a membership organization for educational institutions. It is committed to developing and maintaining high standards of excellence. The Association is one of six regional institutional accrediting associations in the United States. Through its Commissions it accredits, and thereby grants membership, to educational institutions in the nineteen-state North Central region. The Commission on Institutions of Higher Education is recognized by the Secretary of Education and the Committee on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA).

Statement of Mission

The mission of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education is (1) to establish requirements and criteria for the accreditation of institutions of higher education and accredit institutions found to meet those requirements and criteria; (2) to strengthen educational and institutional quality through its assistance to its affiliated institutions, its evaluation processes and its programs, publications, and research; (3) to advocate and exercise self-regulation in higher education through effective peer review; and (4) to provide to the public accurate information concerning the relationship of affiliated institutions with the Commission.

To fulfill its mission, the Commission:

- ◇ monitors and evaluates institutions affiliated with it, to ensure that they continue to meet the Commission's requirements and criteria and strive to improve their institutional strength and the quality of the education they provide;
- ◇ prepares and disseminates publications, provides counsel, sponsors research, and conducts meetings directed toward the improvement of higher education;
- ◇ evaluates itself to assure that its policies and practices represent the best theory and practice of institutional accreditation, promote the self-regulation of institutions, and respond to the educational needs of society;
- ◇ provides a program of non-membership affiliation open to new or developing institutions of higher education that appear capable of achieving accreditation within a specific period of time;
- ◇ involves educators from member institutions in all of its review and decision-making processes, and trains and evaluates them to ensure that their work is consistent and of high quality;
- ◇ serves the public by providing useful information about the role and purposes of accreditation, and by providing through its publications and other means timely and accurate information concerning affiliated institutions;
- ◇ honors the historical purposes of the North Central Association through its work with the Commission on Schools to strengthen the linkages between primary and secondary education and higher education;
- ◇ cooperates with other agencies that share the objectives of assuring the integrity and enhancing the quality of higher education.

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☐ The Commission Staff and Services

The Commission and its staff provide a number of services for institutions.

- **Commission staff assistance.** A full-time staff in the Commission's Chicago office responds to inquiries and provides assistance to institutions, Evaluation Teams, other agencies, and the public. Each institution affiliated with the Commission is assigned to a member of the Commission's professional staff. This staff member serves as the institution's resource person and liaison with the Commission office. This relationship is particularly important when an institution is preparing for evaluation for initial or continued candidacy or accreditation. (Because of the importance of this working relationship, the Commission will remove liaison activities with an institution from a member of the professional staff when it appears that a conflict of interest might be present. The Commission policy, available on request, outlines some potential areas of conflict of interest.) The Commission transmits its official communications to the executive officer of the institution.

  Institutional representatives are welcome to visit the Commission's office in Chicago and meet with their staff liaison; Commission staff also visit institutions on request. Institutions preparing for evaluation of any kind should communicate with their staff liaison. Although not all institutional changes require Commission action, it is essential that an institution contact the staff whenever it considers a change that might affect its status with the Commission (see Chapter 12). To assist in communication, the Commission maintains a WATS line, an 800 toll-free line, a fax machine, and access to Internet.

  The Commission staff liaison reviews the institution's self-study plan, provides counsel about ways to integrate the self-study process for Commission evaluation with an institution's ongoing evaluation and planning programs, develops a proposed team for the evaluation visit, and reviews the draft of the institution's Self-Study Report. It should be clearly understood, however, that staff do not make candidacy or accreditation decisions or recommendations.

- **The Annual Meeting.** The Annual Meeting of the North Central Association is held in Chicago in early spring. As a part of the Annual Meeting, the Commission conducts an extensive program on self-study, evaluation, and institutional improvement for institutional representatives and Consultant-Evaluators. Program tracks focus on Preparing for Self-Study and Evaluation, Current Issues in Higher Education, and Seeking Affiliation with the Commission. In recent years, groups of sessions have examined such topics as use of technology in educational programs, equity and diversity, general education, and international education. In addition, the Commission has offered a major track in each of the past several years on assessment of student academic achievement. Approximately 1,800 faculty and administrators from a wide variety of higher education institutions attend the Commission's program at the Annual Meeting. An equal number of elementary and secondary school representatives participate in the program of the Commission on Schools.

  One- and two-year reminder letters about forthcoming evaluations encourage institutions to send representatives to the Annual Meeting. Many sessions provide guidance about various elements of the self-study and accreditation processes, an opportunity to review Commission policies and procedures and to examine sample Self-Study Reports, and a chance to exchange information and ideas with people from other institutions who are or have recently been engaged in self-study.

  Attendance is voluntary. The Meeting is open to all persons interested in self-study and institutional improvement; it is particularly useful for Self-Study Coordinators, Steering Committee members, executive officers, and trustees of institutions scheduled for evaluations in the next several years. Program information and registration materials are widely distributed to member institutions, Consultant-Evaluators, and others in late fall.

- **Commission publications.** Through its publications, the Commission provides information about its work. *A Handbook of Accreditation*, the principal publication of the Commission, should be consulted for

essential information about Commission policies and procedures. The *Briefing* newsletter, published three times each year, is especially helpful for information on current developments. The *NCA Quarterly* is another useful resource, with each of the Association's two Commissions responsible for two issues a year—one issue providing that Commission's formal list of affiliated institutions, the other serving as a journal of articles relevant to that Commission's work. One outcome of the Annual Meeting program is the annual publication, *A Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement*, which offers useful information from the perspective of persons who have recently been involved in self-study, experienced evaluators, and others involved in higher education.

- **Information to the public.** The Commission receives a wide variety of communications from the general public. The office responds directly to such matters as they relate to affiliation; many inquiries are referred to other appropriate associations and agencies. The Commission's brochure, *Accreditation of Postsecondary Institutions: An Overview*, is particularly helpful in explaining the work of the Commission to the general public. Detailed information on the status and scope of all affiliated institutions is available to the public through the annual directory listing published in the spring issue of the *NCA Quarterly*. Commission actions are reported in the *Briefing* newsletter. All Commission publications are available to the public from the Commission offices for a modest fee. The Commission may also develop a Public Disclosure Notice to inform the public about a recent action or a significant development in the relationship of an affiliated institution with the Commission. The Commission and the public is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 15.

Relations with Governmental Agencies

To determine eligibility for United States government assistance under certain legislation, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) consults the lists of postsecondary institutions affiliated with nationally recognized accrediting agencies that the government views as reliable authorities on the quality of educational institutions and programs. Because the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education is among these governmentally-recognized authorities, affiliation with the Commission helps an institution become eligible for various federal funds. The most recent review of the Commission by the USDE was conducted in 1991-92. The Secretary of Education continued recognition of the Commission in 1993.

The Commission also maintains communications and discussions with officers of state coordinating and governing boards and State Postsecondary Review Entities (SPREs) to clarify the functions and concerns of the Commission with respect to its affiliated institutions affected by these types of boards.

2 Affiliation with the Commission

FORMS OF AFFILIATION

Institutions of higher education may be affiliated with the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, and through it with the Association, in either of two ways. One is as a **candidate institution;** the other is as an **accredited institution.** Both affiliations are voluntary and are initiated by an institution.

Because candidacy is not a prerequisite to accreditation, an institution applying for initial affiliation may apply for either status. The Commission staff liaison will explain the options as the institution begins its self-study. New or developing institutions usually choose to seek candidacy; older, more established institutions sometimes choose to seek accreditation. The choice of which form of affiliation to pursue will be based on the institution's assessment of whether it meets the Criteria for Accreditation or the Candidacy Program.

The accreditation of an institution includes all its components, wherever located. A component of a larger institution may be separately accreditable if a significant portion of responsibility and decision-making for its educational activities lies within the component and not in the other parts of the larger system. The Commission determines, following consultation with the executive officer of the institutional system, whether the system will be accredited or whether its components will be separately accredited, and how the evaluation will be conducted.

☐ Candidacy Status

Candidacy is a preaccreditation status and, unlike accreditation, does not carry with it membership in the Association. Candidacy indicates that an institution fulfills the expectations of the Commission's Candidacy Program, which include meeting the General Institutional Requirements (GIRs). Candidacy gives an institution the opportunity to establish a formal, publicly-recognized relationship with the Association. It is the recommended approach to seeking accreditation for most non-affiliated institutions. An institution granted candidacy is progressing toward accreditation; **candidacy does not automatically assure eventual accreditation.** Chapter 13 provides a full discussion of the Commission's Candidacy Program.

- **Reapplication of an institution denied candidacy.** An institution denied candidacy upon initial application must wait one year before reapplying. This period of time may be shortened by Commission action.

☐ Accreditation Status

Accreditation of an institution establishes that institution's membership in the North Central Association. Accreditation indicates both to other institutions and to the public that an institution meets the Commission's General Institutional Requirements and Criteria for Accreditation. It also indicates the institution's commitment to the purposes and goals of the Association. An institution becomes accredited by the Commission through the evaluation process outlined in this *Handbook.*

- **Reapplication of an institution denied accreditation.** An institution denied accreditation upon initial application must wait two years before reapplying. This period of time may be shortened by Commission action.

☐ Institutional Withdrawal of Application for Affiliation

An institution may withdraw its application for affiliation without prejudice at any time before a decision on that affiliation is made by the Commission. The withdrawal must be initiated by the legally designated

governing body of the institution. The Commission will retain all fees if the application is withdrawn after the evaluation visit has been made.

☐ Institutional Resignation from Affiliation

Affiliation with the Association and the Commission is voluntary, and an institution may resign its affiliation at any time. Because resignation from affiliation terminates the institution's candidacy or accreditation, it must be initiated by action of the legally designated governing body of the institution. Resignation does not release the institution from past and current financial obligations with the Commission. An institution wishing to reaffiliate must follow the same procedure as an institution never affiliated with the Commission.

☐ Commission Reconsideration of Affiliation

The Commission reserves the right to reconsider the affiliation of an institution at any time; **therefore, it may call for a comprehensive or focused evaluation whenever it believes one is warranted.** In such cases, the Commission will specify both the timing of the evaluation and the materials to be used, without the usual cycle of reminder letters and without the usual requirement (in the case of comprehensive evaluations) that the institution undertake a comprehensive self-study process and prepare a Self-Study Report. The Commission will provide clearly specified reasons for its decision.

☐ Commission Withdrawal of Affiliation

The Commission, after *due and careful* consideration, can withdraw the affiliation of an institution. As well as requiring proper conformity with Commission policies and procedures, "due and careful consideration" involves an evaluation, including a comprehensive or focused visit within the year preceding Commission withdrawal of affiliation.

- ◊ An institution may lose its affiliation if it fails to meet one or more of the General Institutional Requirements and/or the Criteria for the status held.
- ◊ An institution may lose its affiliation if it fails to meet institutional obligations of affiliation within a designated time after being warned of non-compliance.
- ◊ An institution may lose its affiliation if it initiates a change after failing to receive Commission approval of the change.
- ◊ An institution may lose its affiliation if it ceases to operate as an educational institution unless the institution makes special arrangements with the Commission.

- **Reapplication following withdrawal of affiliation.** When the Commission withdraws the affiliation of an institution—either candidacy or accreditation—it will not consider an application for affiliation from the same institution until a period of at least two years has elapsed following the date withdrawal action became effective. Exceptions may be made by the Commission.

☐ Debts to the Commission

Withdrawal of affiliation by the Commission does not cancel any debts owed the Commission by the institution. Neither does withdrawal of an application for affiliation by the institution. In either case, unless exempted by the Commission, an institution seeking a new affiliation status with the Commission must first pay any debts it might previously have incurred with the Commission.

☐ Appeal of a Commission Decision to Deny or Withdraw Affiliation

Institutions have the right to appeal a Commission decision that denies or withdraws accreditation or candidacy. The appeal is made outside the Commission under procedures established by the Board of Directors of the North Central Association, as provided in the Constitution of the Association. In its Rules of Procedure, the Board has specified that the grounds for such an appeal are "(a) that the Commission based its decision on factual information that was substantially incorrect, not related to the Commission's criteria for such decisions, or of insufficient weight to support the decision; and/or (b) that the Commission in making its decision departed significantly from its procedures established in writing or by custom."

The appeal process requires, among other things, that notice of intent to appeal be an official action of the institution's governing board and be filed with the Secretary of the Association not later than thirty days after the Commission's action. The "Summary of Appeals Procedure" is available from the Commission office.

INSTITUTIONAL OBLIGATIONS OF AFFILIATION

All institutions affiliated with the Commission voluntarily agree to meet institutional obligations of affiliation, including undergoing periodic review and making reports as requested by the Commission. Failure to fulfill these obligations could result in loss of affiliation.

The Commission reviews the status of an institution through periodic comprehensive evaluations. The Commission monitors its affiliated institutions between comprehensive evaluations in a variety of ways. Reports and focused evaluations may be required as part of the Commission's accrediting action. In addition, the Commission's Annual Report form provides current information on institutional activities and trends. In some cases, the information gathered in these ways can lead to further monitoring.

☐ The Periodic Review Cycle

Candidacy is continued by evaluations scheduled at least every two years during the candidacy period. Every accredited institution must have its status reaffirmed not later than five years after it has been initially granted, and not later than ten years following each subsequent reaffirmation. The time for the next comprehensive evaluation for continued candidacy or accreditation is explicitly stated in the Commission's accreditation action; however, the time of that evaluation may be changed and may occur sooner if the institution introduces or plans changes that substantially alter its mission, functions, or character (see Chapter 12).

☐ Reports

The Commission monitors institutions by requiring written reports addressing specific developments. The staff liaison may ask the Team Chair to review the institution's report as it is sometimes difficult for staff to judge the adequacy of the report as a response to team concerns. The staff member prepares an analysis of the report, which includes the Team Chair's comments, if sought, and the staff action on the report. The analysis is sent to the institution and, if appropriate, the Team Chair.

Commission staff ultimately has the authority to take certain actions on institutional reports. Staff actions on reports are reported to the Commission. The staff may:

- ◊ eliminate the requirement of a report after receiving and accepting the report;
- ◊ change the due date of a report when necessary (e.g., if additional information is needed);

- require a follow-up report(s) if staff determines that the report does not demonstrate sufficient progress in alleviating the team's concerns.

In some cases, information in a report may lead staff to recommend another form of monitoring; such monitoring might include the scheduling of a focused visit, the addition of a stipulation on the Statement of Affiliation Status, or the rescheduling of the next comprehensive evaluation. The staff recommendation may be implemented in one of two ways. The institution may request the additional monitoring. If the institution makes such a request, then the monitoring will proceed according to established policies and procedures. If the institution does not request the monitoring, the Commission staff can take a recommendation to the Commission. If such action is sought, a staff analysis that includes the staff recommendation and the institution's reaction is provided to the institution, the Commission, and, if appropriate, the Team Chair.

Beginning in 1993, the Commission began to differentiate among the required reports: progress reports, monitoring reports, and contingency reports. Their differences are outlined later in this chapter.

Focused Evaluations

Focused evaluations are another form of Commission monitoring; they occur between comprehensive evaluations and examine only certain aspects of an institution. Focused evaluations are not primarily concerned with determining whether an institution fulfills the Criteria for Accreditation. Instead they are meant to monitor specific developments and changes at an institution or to follow up on concerns identified by a previous evaluation process.

The Commission may call for a focused evaluation as part of its accrediting action. Such actions are recorded on the institution's Statement of Affiliation Status. In addition, either the Commission or the Commission staff may schedule a focused evaluation under Commission policies concerning institutional change (see Chapter 12). In either case, focused evaluations do not require a complete institutional self-study. Focused evaluations, in unique situations, may lead to a recommendation for Probation or withdrawal of affiliation.

Beginning in 1992 and continuing through June 1995, all Commission-mandated focused evaluations will include a review of the institution's progress in assessing student academic achievement (see Chapter 14). Focused evaluations are discussed in detail in Chapter 11.

Institutional Annual Reports

In the spring of each year, the Commission sends each affiliated institution an Annual Report form. The Commission considers the Annual Report to be such a significant monitoring tool that failure to supply it may invite sanctions.

The Annual Report requests information about enrollment and financial trends, about changes in degree offerings, and about contractual arrangements. It includes the Annual Report of Off-Campus Offerings that requests detailed information about all off-campus operations. The Annual Report is structured around the Record of Status and Scope (RSS). The Commission staff reviews the reports to assure that institutional operations continue to comply with Commission policies and are within the affiliation status of the institution. Inconsistencies between activities reported and the current RSS may lead to the initiation of the Commission's change process (see Chapter 12). The most recent Annual Report is included in the materials sent to Evaluation Teams from the Commission office.

Payment of Dues and Fees

Payment of dues and fees is also an obligation of affiliation. The Commission bills affiliated institutions for annual dues that are payable on receipt of the billing and are not refundable under any circumstances. The

Commission bills the institution for all evaluation processes. Payment is due prior to the evaluation. The Commission reserves the right to withdraw the affiliation of an institution that, after due notice, fails to meet its financial obligations.

SANCTIONS

From time to time the Commission may apply sanctions against its affiliated institutions. Currently, the Commission has two sanctions: Memorandum for the Record and Probation.

☐ Memorandum for the Record

The Memorandum for the Record is the sanction applied to an institution that initiates a change without receiving prior Commission approval. The policy states:

> The Memorandum for the Record is an official Commission sanction which indicates that an institution, because of its initiation of institutional change without required prior Commission approval, has violated its institutional obligations of affiliation.
>
> The Commission determines whether a Memorandum should be added to the institution's official file. It makes that decision (1) upon the recommendation of the Commission staff and/or Evaluation Team or (2) in situations deemed appropriate by the Commission. A Memorandum for the Record may be issued whether the institution ceases the change or seeks approval for it. The Memorandum, as a part of the institution's official file, will be shared with the next Evaluation Team.

This policy does not apply to an institution that has initiated change after failing to receive Commission approval of the change. Policy holds that in such situations accreditation will be automatically withdrawn.

☐ Probation

Probation is a public status signifying that conditions exist at an accredited institution that endanger its ability to meet the Commission's General Institutional Requirements and/or Criteria for Accreditation. An institution on Probation must disclose this status whenever it refers to its North Central Association accreditation.

Only the Commission, acting on a recommendation made to it, can place an institution on Probation. A recommendation that an institution be placed on Probation may be made to the Commission

- ◇ by a comprehensive or focused visit team,
- ◇ by a Review Committee, or
- ◇ by the Executive Director of the Commission if conditions appear to warrant Commission action without an evaluation visit.

A team recommendation for Probation is automatically referred to a Review Committee. In all cases, the Commission acts on a recommendation for Probation only if the institution's Executive Officer has been given an opportunity to place before the Commission a written response to the recommendation.

In placing an institution on Probation, the Commission identifies in the Statement of Affiliation Status section of the institution's Record of Status and Scope (RSS), (1) the specific conditions that led to Probation and (2) the date of the institution's next comprehensive evaluation, at which time the institution must provide clear

evidence of its progress toward ameliorating those conditions. The RSS of an institution on Probation is available on request from the Commission after the institution has been notified officially of its Probation. The RSS is published in the Commission's annual lists of affiliated institutions.

The Commission's decision to remove an institution's Probation status is based upon recommendations from a comprehensive evaluation and a Review Committee. The Commission follows its established policies in choosing to accept, reject, or modify these recommendations.

THE RECORD OF STATUS AND SCOPE

The Commission includes in its statement of mission its commitment to provide to the public accurate information concerning the relationship of institutions affiliated with the Commission. This relationship is captured in a public disclosure document, a **Record of Status and Scope (RSS),** which reports the status of the institution with the Commission and additional information from the institution's Annual Report. The Commission has prepared an RSS for each institution affiliated with it. The RSS, printed in full each year in the *North Central Association Quarterly,* is provided to anyone who requests it.

The RSS consists of two major components:

- ◇ the **Statement of Affiliation Status** (SAS), the basic document that summarizes the status of the institution with the Commission, and
- ◇ the **Statement of Institutional Scope and Activities** (SISA), a summary of information gleaned by the Commission from the Institutional Annual Report.

☐ The Statement of Affiliation Status (SAS)

Each Statement of Affiliation Status section of the RSS contains these basic elements: name; highest degree awarded; most recent Commission action; status; stipulations; site approval exemption; progress reports required; monitoring reports required; contingency reports required; other evaluations required; last comprehensive evaluation; next comprehensive evaluation. Each time a change in the information pertaining to one or more of these elements occurs, the SAS is reviewed and revised through appropriate Commission processes; the revised SAS is sent to the institution by the office of the Commission. Thus, at any given time, the most recent SAS contains the current information concerning the institution's status with the Commission.

☐ The Statement of Institutional Scope and Activities (SISA)

Each spring the Commission submits an Institutional Annual Report to all affiliated institutions. That report requires the institution to provide, among other things, information on the following data: headcount and FTE enrollment; number of degree programs offered at each degree level; lists of degree programs added and deleted in the previous year; lists of off campus branches, sites where complete degrees are offered, and sites where five or more courses are offered; lists of programs offered primarily through forms of distance delivery; and lists of programs dependent upon contractual and/or consortial arrangements.

From that information, the Commission constructs for each institution a Statement of Institutional Scope and Activities. Because this information is self-reported, the Commission's mechanism for developing the SISA allows for some variation among statements. Teams, of course, confirm the accuracy of the SISA during evaluation visits; but institutions may amend the SISA yearly, as long as the amendment does not violate Commission policy on institutional change (see Chapter 12).

☐ A Sample RSS

In its final form, a published Record of Status and Scope might look like this:

JOHN DEWEY COLLEGE
1100 South State Street
Chicago, IL 60605
(312) 942-6060
Jane E. Jones, President

This section describes the institution's official status with the Commission.

Statement of Affiliation Status
Status: Accredited. (1952- .)
Highest degree awarded: Master's.
Most recent action: October 16, 1990.
Stipulations on affiliation status: Out of state offerings are limited to the M.B.A. offered in Dubuque, IA. International offerings are limited to the Bachelor of Arts degree offered in Tokyo, Japan.
New degree sites: No prior Commission approval required for offering existing degree programs at new sites in Cook and DuPage counties.
Progress reports required: None.
Monitoring reports required: None.
Contingency reports required: None.
Other visits required: None.
Last comprehensive evaluation: 1984-85.
Next comprehensive evaluation: 1994-95.

This information is updated from the institution's Annual Report.

Statement of Institutional Scope and Activities
Legal status: Private, not for profit institution.
Fall 1993 student FTE: 1018/387 — *indicates undergraduate/ graduate enrollments*
Fall 1993 student headcount: 1400/387.
Number of degre programs: Bachelor's (24) Master's (1).
Degree sites with full services: Dubuque, Iowa.
Other degree sites: Schaumburg, IL; Glen Ellyn, IL; Naperville, IL; Rockford, IL; Tokyo, Japan.
Other sites: courses offered at 5 other locations in state.
Other program features: The institution provides credit offerings in correctional institutions.

☐ The Role of the RSS in the Evaluation Process

Evaluation Teams and Review Committees use the SAS Worksheet to record their recommendations about the institution's future relationship with the Commission. The SAS Worksheet serves as the primary document of the evaluation process for the Commission when it takes final action. In taking its action, the Commission approves a new Statement of Affiliation Status for the institution. The Evaluation Team also confirms the contents of the SISA or makes appropriate corrections on it.

The Evaluation Team or the Review Committee indicates its recommendation by specifying the suggested wording for each section of the SAS. If it recommends a change in the current wording, it specifies that change.

using the wording discussed below, in the space provided on the SAS Worksheet. If it recommends no change in the current wording, it indicates that in the appropriate space by writing *"Retain Original Wording."*

- **Highest degree awarded.** This section will change only if the institution has requested a change as part of the evaluation.

- **Status.** The Evaluation Team must decide whether the institution should be granted or continued in candidacy or accreditation status. (Note: This section may be altered by a focused visit team only if Probation is being recommended.)

  The Evaluation Team may make one of these possible recommendations concerning the institution's status:

  - ***that candidacy or accreditation be granted or continued.*** The team recommends that candidacy or accreditation be granted or continued if it finds, and the second section of its report documents, that the institution meets the General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for Accreditation or the expectations of the Candidacy Program.

  - ***that the institution be placed on Probation.*** The team recommends that accreditation be continued with Probation if it finds, and the second section of its report documents, that while the institution currently meets the General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for Accreditation, specific and vital changes are necessary for it to continue to meet them. (The Commission's Probation policy is discussed earlier in this chapter.) The team summarizes within the rationale section of its report its reasons for this recommendation by detailing the areas of concern that need to be ameliorated. It records its recommendation on the SAS Worksheet by:

    - adding "on Probation" to the Status section and

    - setting the date in the "Next comprehensive evaluations" section. In this section, the team summarizes the specific conditions that led to the Probation. The institution must provide clear evidence of its progress toward ameliorating these conditions at the time of the comprehensive evaluation.

  - ***that accreditation be denied but candidacy be continued.*** The team recommends that accreditation be denied but candidacy be continued if it finds, and the second section of its report documents, that an institution applying for accreditation before the end of its candidacy period does not meet the Criteria for Accreditation but continues to meet the General Institutional Requirements and the expectations of the Candidacy Program. The team summarizes its reasons for this recommendation in the rationale section of its report. The team's recommendation that the institution's candidacy should remain the same is reflected on the SAS Worksheet by specifying *"Candidate"* in the Status section. (In exceptional cases, the team may choose to recommend that an institution applying for accreditation at the end of its candidacy period be denied accreditation but that its candidacy be extended for a limited time.)

  - ***that candidacy or accreditation be denied or withdrawn.*** The team recommends that candidacy or accreditation be denied or withdrawn if it finds, and the second section of its report documents, that the institution does not meet one or more of the General Institutional Requirements and/or one or more of the Criteria for Accreditation or fails to fulfill the expectations of the Candidacy Program. In this case, the team is recommending that the institution be denied initial affiliation or that continued affiliation be withdrawn and, therefore, that the institution no longer have a Statement of Affiliation Status. Should the team make this determination, its reasons for this recommendation will be explained in the rationale section of its report. It will indicate *"None"* in the Status section of the SAS Worksheet and *"Not applicable"* in every other section.

- **Most recent Commission action.** The Commission staff will automatically change this as the result of each action, whether it be action taken by the Commission or by the staff. A brief description will also be given (e.g., *"extend accreditation to include the Master's in Business Administration," "accept required progress report," "comprehensive evaluation").* The team will not need to recommend new wording; the Commission will provide the appropriate wording.

- **Stipulations.** Stipulations place limits on the development of new activities or new programs, including limits on the size, extent, or location of certain of the institution's activities. In some cases, the stipulations may restrict both program offerings and off-campus sites. The team may recommend any stipulations that it decides are warranted. To change a stipulation, the institution must implement the Commission's procedures for institutional change, using either an Evaluators' Panel or a focused visit. The team summarizes its reasons for these recommendations in the rationale section of its report and notes them on the SAS Worksheet.

  Some examples:

  - A stipulation limiting educational programs: *"Accreditation at the master's degree level is limited to the Master of Business Administration degree program."*
  - A stipulation limiting locations: *"Open no new instructional sites in Iowa without prior Commission approval."*
  - A stipulation limiting off-campus sites and programs at the sites: *"Sites outside the state are limited to Dubuque, Iowa. Programs at that site are limited to the Master of Business Administration degree program."*
  - A stipulation limiting international sites and programs at the sites: *"Sites outside the United States are limited to the current site in Tokyo, Japan. Programs at that site are limited to the Associate of Arts degree program."*

- **New degree sites.** If the team wants to recommend that the institution be exempted from the specific Commission policy on institutional change related to opening and closing sites at which degree programs are offered, it notes the exemption in this part of the SAS. In determining whether to place anything in this section, the team should do the following.

  - Determine whether flexible initiation and contraction of such sites are in keeping with the institution's mission and purposes.
  - Review written institutional strategic and long-range plans.
  - Study carefully the administrative structures in place to assure the quality of extended offerings.
  - Discuss with the administration and governing board anticipated and planned institutional changes.

  If the team concludes that an institution should be exempted from the Commission's policies that require prior approval for opening new sites at which degree programs will be provided, it will use these words: *"No prior Commission approval required for offering existing degree programs at new sites . . ."* The team must identify specifically the geographical range of that exemption, e.g. *"within the state."* The Commission will monitor these changes through the Institutional Annual Report (discussed earlier in this chapter) through which the institution discloses all off-campus operations.

Some examples:

- A broadly generic exemption: A state university by state mandate delivers a variety of degree programs at various sites throughout the state. The sites might open and close depending on need. The team concludes that the university has strong oversight structures to assure the quality of instruction: *"No prior Commission approval required for offering existing degree programs at new sites throughout the state (district, service area)."*

- A specific exemption: A private church-related college offers a strong off-campus degree completion program and seeks authorization to offer that program throughout a five-state service area. The team concludes that the college has tested processes through which it can assure the quality of this program: *"No prior Commission approval required for offering the existing degree completion program at new sites in Arizona, Colorado, Texas, New Mexico, and Oklahoma."*

- A specific exemption: A comprehensive community college has a proven history of contracting with the military for delivery of a variety of educational programs. The team concludes that the effectiveness of the college's administrative structures are so well-tested that the institution should be free to contract anywhere the military exists: *"No prior Commission approval required for offering existing degree programs on military bases anywhere in the world."*

If the Evaluation Team does not wish to extend to the institution this exemption, it should enter *"Prior Commission approval required."* The institution then must follow all appropriate Commission policies regarding institutional change (see Chapter 12).

- **Progress reports required.** The Evaluation Team may recommend that the institution be required to file progress reports between evaluations with the office of the Commission. The team should ask for a progress report when its goal is that the Commission receive specific, important information from the institution, monitor how an institution is progressing in coping with certain changes or concerns, or receive evidence that institutional plans came to fruition as expected by the institution and the team.

  In deciding to require progress reports, the team respects the following guidelines.

  - The topic(s) to be addressed in a report are clear, specific, and preferably no more than three in number.

  - The subject(s) of the report(s) can be evaluated on the basis of written materials alone and do not require an evaluation visit for verification.

  - A specific date on which the report is to be filed is indicated in the recommendation.

  The team specifies in the rationale section of its report the specific nature of the progress report(s) and provides all specific comments related to the report(s). On the SAS, the team enters the date of the report and a brief listing of the topic(s) to be addressed:

  "A report by (day/month/year) on (topic[s])."

- **Monitoring reports required.** The team may recommend that the institution be required to file monitoring reports with the office of the Commission between evaluations. The team recommends a monitoring report in situations requiring careful ongoing attention. They signal that the situation should change, or the Commission staff must determine whether a focused or comprehensive evaluation should be conducted (or some other form of monitoring). It is especially important with a monitoring report that the team specify how the report should be used. It may wish to indicate in its rationale, for example, that a report should be filed on a certain date and that *"unless the report shows ... then ...."* The team should explain the basis for evaluating the report and the actions that the report should trigger.

In requiring monitoring reports, the team respects the following guidelines.

- The topic(s) to be addressed in a report are clear, specific, and significantly important to require prompt monitoring.
- The subject(s) of the report(s) are able to be evaluated on the basis of written materials alone and do not require an evaluation visit for verification.
- A specific date on which the report is to be filed is indicated in the recommendation.
- The report(s) are to be filed within three years of the evaluation visit.

The team specifies in the rationale section of its report the specific nature of the monitoring report(s) and provides all specific comments related to the report(s).

For example:

- Enrollment trends are declining, leading to yearly deficits. The College must either recruit, admit, and retain more students or find new sources of income. With no endowment, this institution cannot continue much longer to tolerate these shortfalls.

On the SAS, the team enters the date of the report and a brief listing of the topic(s) to be addressed:

"A report by (day/month/year) on enrollments and development efforts."

- **Contingency reports required.** The team may recommend that the institution be required to file contingency reports with the office of the Commission between evaluations in the event that changes occur in conditions that have a significant effect on the institution. In requiring contingency reports, the team and the Commission specify why the change requires close monitoring, exactly which conditions require the institution to file the report, and what issues the staff should consider when the report is received. A recommendation for a contingency report might read:

  "A report if the legislature changes the funding formula."

- **Other visits required.** The team may recommend that one or more focused evaluations be conducted before the next comprehensive evaluation if it finds and documents that such evaluations are warranted. If it decides that a focused evaluation is necessary, the subject(s) of the focused evaluation(s) must be specific, clear, and limited in number. The team specifies in the rationale section of its report the specific nature of the focused visit and provides there all specific comments including a rationale for each topic included in the visit. On the SAS, the team enters the date of the visit and a brief listing of the topic(s) to be covered in the visit:

  "Focused visit in (academic year) on (topic[s])."

- **Next comprehensive evaluation.** The team must recommend a time for the next comprehensive evaluation. Commission policy requires that a comprehensive evaluation be scheduled no later than five years after an institution is granted initial accreditation, and that every institution affiliated with the Commission undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least every ten years. Candidate institutions must be evaluated biennially during their candidacy period.

  The team is required to provide a concise and convincing explanation for its recommendation concerning the timing of the comprehensive evaluation in the rationale section of the Team Report. When making its decision about the timing of the next comprehensive evaluation, the team should consider the following questions.

- ◇ When should the Commission next review the accreditability of the institution?
- ◇ What compelling factors exist to indicate that the institution should undergo a comprehensive evaluation in less than ten years?

If the institution is experiencing some significant problems that need immediate attention, a comprehensive evaluation probably should be called for within the next five years. If, however, the institution is basically sound, but faces the same uncertainties confronted by most institutions, the decennial cycle is probably most appropriate. Increasingly, Evaluation Teams place comprehensive evaluations on the decennial cycle and use reports or focused visits to provide appropriate Commission monitoring.

In addition, teams should keep in mind that, while most comprehensive evaluations are scheduled for fixed times, the Commission reserves the right to reschedule the time of the next evaluation visit for an earlier date or to call for a report or a focused evaluation to respond to changes that occur within an institution.

3 The General Institutional Requirements

PURPOSE OF THE GENERAL INSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The Commission's General Institutional Requirements (GIRs) fulfill the following purposes.

- ◇ They define the broadest parameters of the universe of institutions of higher education that can choose to hold affiliation with the Commission.
- ◇ They establish a threshold of institutional development needed by an institution seeking to affiliate with the Commission.
- ◇ They reflect the Commission's basic expectations of all affiliated institutions of higher education, whether candidates or accredited.

GIRs, like the Criteria for Accreditation and the Candidacy Program, are reviewed periodically to ensure that they are responsive to the changing nature of and expectations for higher education. The Commission revises or changes them only after notifying its membership and seeking responses.

☐ The Relationship between the GIRs and the Explication

While most of the GIRs are objective in nature, some use words that require judgment. The Commission provides a fuller explanation of its expectation for each GIR through an accompanying explication to assist institutions and Evaluation Teams in making their judgments. The explication is meant to elucidate the GIR, not substitute for it.

An example:

- ◇ GIR # 10 calls for "a sufficient number" of full-time faculty. The explication proposes that "it is reasonable to expect that an institution would seldom have fewer than one full-time faculty member for each major that it offers." However, the GIR allows for more than a mathematical comparison of majors and faculty.

The Commission can amend the explication as needed to ensure that it is clear and readily understood and is being used effectively and consistently by institutions and Evaluation Teams.

☐ The Relationship between the GIRs and the Preliminary Information Form (PIF)

The Commission staff uses the Preliminary Information Form process to screen **non-affiliated institutions seeking initial status.** This process does not apply to institutions currently holding candidacy or accredited status. The Commission schedules an evaluation visit after an institution provides, through the PIF process, convincing evidence that an Evaluation Team might be able to determine that the GIRs are met.

The PIF process establishes no status between the institution and the Commission. All Commission statuses require that institutions be measured against both the GIRs and the Criteria and that measurement can only be done by an on-site team whose recommendation then moves through review processes until it reaches the Commission for final action. Further information on the PIF is provided in Chapter 13.

THE GENERAL INSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

An institution affiliated with the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools meets these General Institutional Requirements.

GIR	Explication
Mission	
1. It has a mission statement, formally adopted by the governing board and made public, declaring that it is an institution of higher education.	A mission statement defines the basic character of an institution, including a brief description of its primary educational program(s) and their purposes, the students for which they are intended, the geographical area served by the institution (or the particular constituency it serves), and an account of how the institution fits within the broader higher education community. Because the Commission's affiliation with an institution testifies to the appropriateness of its activities as well as to their quality, it is necessary that the institution's mission statement be adopted formally by the institution's governing board and be made available to the public at large, particularly to prospective students.
2. It is a degree-granting institution.	Through this requirement, the Commission limits affiliation to degree-granting institutions. While an affiliated institution might offer certificates and diploma programs, the Commission expects an appropriate academic focus on its degree programs.
Authorization	
3. It has legal authorization to grant its degrees, and it meets all the legal requirements to operate as an institution of higher education wherever it conducts its activities.	An institution of higher education, no matter in which state(s) it is located, must hold appropriate state (and, in a few cases, federal) authority to exist and to grant its degrees. All of the Commission's activities presume the legality of the institution and its operations. Therefore, before an institution can affiliate with the Commission—and before the Commission can extend an institution's affiliated status to include new sites in new states—it must have assurance that the institution holds all appropriate legal authorizations for its higher education activities.
4. It has legal documents to confirm its status: not-for-profit, for-profit or public.	It is essential that the Commission, as well as the public at large, understand clearly the corporate nature of an institution. Because that nature is confirmed by legal documents, the Commission requires that those documents exist and are available for review.
Governance	
5. It has a governing board that possesses and exercises necessary legal power to establish and review basic policies that govern the institution.	Corporate charters, state legislation, or federal charters typically outline the basic authority held by institutions' governing boards. The Commission looks to those documents and to the subsequent bylaws established by the institution to determine whether the governing board possesses appropriate power. In the minutes of the board the Commission seeks evidence that the board carries out its authority. Governing boards should establish policies to direct the institution. Boards should meet frequently enough and be so structured that they possess sound knowledge upon which to establish and review those policies.

GIR	Explication
6. Its governing board includes public members and is sufficiently autonomous from the administration and ownership to assure the integrity of the institution.	Although every governing board will be concerned primarily with the integrity and academic quality of the institution for which it is responsible, it also has an obligation to assure that the institution serves the public interest. The Commission expects, therefore, that each governing board will have "public members," people who can make decisions free of any personal or financial interests that might be affected. Moreover, the Commission expects that a governing board, while conscious of the interests of a variety of constituencies, has structures and personnel that make it capable of decision-making free from undue influence of governmental bodies, supporting bodies, and employees.
7. It has an executive officer designated by the governing board to provide administrative leadership for the institution.	The Commission requires that the governing board designate a person who leads the institution and who coordinates the day-by-day running of it. Typically that person is the president. No matter what the title, that person must hold appropriate authority to carry out the broad policies established by the governing board.
8. Its governing board authorizes the institution's affiliation with the Commission.	In affiliating with the Commission, an institution enters a relationship that it agrees to honor. The governing board must be knowledgeable about that relationship and must approve, by formal action, the institution's entry into it.

Faculty

9. It employs a faculty that has earned from accredited institutions the degrees appropriate to the level of instruction offered by the institution.

This GIR describes the threshold educational requirements for an institution's faculty. In this requirement, faculty includes both full-time and part-time faculty. All of an institution's faculty, both those at its home campus(es) and those at other instructional sites, are included in judging this requirement.

Typically, this means that:	
in an institution whose highest degree programs are significantly or predominantly at the:	***most (i.e., at least two-thirds to three-quarters) of the faculty have earned, from accredited institutions:***
– associate's level	**– bachelor's or graduate degrees**
– bachelor's level	**– graduate degrees**
– graduate level	**– doctoral degrees**

However, several other factors may lead a team to conclude that this GIR is met. Particularly when judging institutions in or applying for candidacy, a team might consider whether the institution can document the following conditions.

◇ All or nearly all faculty teaching transfer courses (i.e., courses in subject areas where work toward the associate degree carries transfer credit toward higher degrees—the liberal arts, business, technology, and an ever-growing number of other fields) hold graduate degrees. (Increasingly, any technical course is liable to be transferable toward a higher degree.)

GIR	Explication
GIR 9 continued...	◊ Faculty who now hold less than baccalaureate degrees possess special training, experience, creative production, or other accomplishments or distinctions that qualify them for their specific assignments, and, over the next three to five years, the institution will replace these faculty or upgrade their academic credentials. ◊ Faculty who do not hold the typical degrees expected in an institution offering a particular level of instruction are nearing completion of these degrees, or are, with institutional encouragement and support, actively pursuing courses of study that will lead to these degrees within three to five years. ◊ The institution has adopted and implemented criteria and processes for hiring and replacing faculty that require possession of the degree typical for an institution offering its level of instruction. ◊ Recent changes (i.e., over the last three years) in the composition of the faculty demonstrate clearly a pattern that the institution is moving to improve its faculty's qualifications.
10. **A sufficient number of the faculty are full-time employees of the institution.**	This GIR speaks to the need for a core of full-time faculty at every institution. Included are faculty whose primary employment is with the institution, whose responsibilities constitute full-time employment, and whose primary responsibilities are instructional. Administrators "with faculty rank" but with no regularly-assigned teaching duties are not counted for purposes of judging this requirement. The Commission has determined that faculty responsibilities at an institution are best fulfilled when a **core of full-time teaching faculty** has as its primary commitment the educational programs provided by the institution. This means full-time rather than part-time employment at the institution. There is no precise mathematical formula to determine the appropriate number of full-time faculty each institution should have. However, it is reasonable to expect that an institution would seldom have fewer than one full-time faculty member for each major that it offers. This expectation captures the common understanding in the higher education community that an institution should limit its program offerings to those that it can adequately staff. A consortial institution staffed by full-time faculty of participating accredited colleges and universities satisfies this requirement.
11. **Its faculty has a significant role in developing and evaluating all of the institution's educational programs.**	This GIR speaks to the role faculty (as defined in GIRs 9 and 10) must play in the design and evaluation of educational programs. **Faculty not only provide instruction and advise students, but also are involved in institutional governance** and operations through their work on committees and other institutional processes. Typically, faculty develop curricula, approve all curricular offerings of the institution, and establish ways to evaluate the effectiveness and currency of the curricula. They are responsible for the quality of off-campus as well as on-campus offerings. Through clearly defined structures, faculty and administrators exercise oversight for all educational offerings.

GIR	Explication
Educational Program	
12. It confers degrees.	By policy, the Commission accredits institutions only after they confer their first degrees. For candidate institutions that have yet to graduate a student, it is sufficient to show that the institution has a plan and timetable ensuring that it will confer degrees within the candidacy period.
13. It has degree programs in operation, with students enrolled in them.	This requirement speaks directly to the nature of institutions acceptable to the Commission. Not only must an affiliated institution offer degree programs, it must also have students actively enrolled in them. This requirement excludes institutions that have authorization to offer degrees, but have students only in short-term programs that do not lead to degrees.
14. Its degree programs are compatible with the institution's mission and are based on recognized fields of study at the higher education level.	The Commission requires that the programs offered by affiliated institutions are both appropriate to the stated mission of the institution and sufficiently common to institutions of higher education. Therefore, the Commission cannot review institutions that offer only programs unique to that institution.
15. Its degrees are appropriately named, following practices common to institutions of higher education in terms of both length and content of the programs.	The naming of degrees usually follows certain traditions revolving around both length and content of program. Often those designators capture the content or breadth of the general education component, the professional content of the program, or the terminal or transfer nature of the program. The Commission requires that affiliated institutions follow such required or common practices in assigning degree designations for their programs. Although some states define by law the length of certain degree programs, most institutions follow standard practice in higher education of awarding degrees only after students have accrued a specific number of semester or quarter hours, have completed a specific number of quarters or semesters of study, and/or have demonstrated proficiencies typically found among students who have accrued the hours of study or have studied for a specific number of years.
16. Its undergraduate degree programs include a coherent general education requirement consistent with the institution's mission and designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and to promote intellectual inquiry.	**Defining General Education** Throughout its history, the Commission has held to the tenet that higher education involves breadth as well as depth of study. General education refers to that component of a student's study that ensures breadth. In 1983 the Commission approved this Statement on General Education, which still applies: > General education is "general" in several clearly identifiable ways: it is not directly related to a student's formal technical, vocational, or professional preparation; it is a part of every student's course of study, regardless of his or her area of emphasis; and it is intended to impart common knowledge, intellectual concepts, and attitudes that every educated person should possess.

GIR	Explication

Recently, the Commission refined its understanding of general education, emphasizing the need for a general education program to be coherent, ensure breadth of knowledge, and promote intellectual inquiry.

Therefore, regardless of how an institution of higher education defines its goals for general education,

- ◊ it will be able to show that it has thoughtfully considered and clearly articulated the purposes and content of the general education it provides to its students;
- ◊ it will give evidence of its commitment to the importance of general education by including an appropriate component of general education in all of its programs of substantial length, whether they lead to certificates, diplomas, or degrees; and
- ◊ if it offers graduate instruction, it will provide further evidence of this commitment by requiring the student to have completed a general education program for admission to its graduate programs.

Documenting the Centrality of General Education

It is essential that an institution of higher education seeking initial or continued affiliation with the Commission document and make public the centrality of general education to its educational endeavors. An evaluation team considers whether the institution's

- ◊ mission and purposes statements articulate the centrality of general education;
- ◊ statements of educational philosophy demonstrate how general education goals are integrated into core, major, and elective courses within the major;
- ◊ institution-wide general education learning objectives are clearly articulated and publicized;
- ◊ assessment of student academic achievement includes the general education component of the program and is linked with expected learning outcomes;
- ◊ faculty teaching general education courses hold graduate degrees that include substantial study (typically a minimum of 18 semester hours at the graduate level) appropriate to the academic field in which they are teaching;
- ◊ faculty have ownership and control over the general education curriculum through active participation in appropriate governance structures; and
- ◊ faculty systematically and comprehensively review the general education curriculum.

GIR	Explication
GIR 16 continued...	Based on its stated purposes for general education, an institution might emphasize in the description of its program either basic curricular patterns, such as a core curriculum or distribution requirements, or it might focus on cognitive experiences and the demonstration of the skills and competencies students acquire as a result of those experiences. Irrespective of how the program is presented, it should be clear that the institution intends to provide a coherent program that ensures breath of knowledge and promotes intellectual inquiry.
17. **It has admission policies and practices that are consistent with the institution's mission and appropriate to its educational programs.**	An institution's admission requirements seek to identify students capable of succeeding both at the institution and in the educational program(s) to which they are admitted. Almost all institutions will need to supplement these requirements with appropriate educational support programs and advising services. Careful attention to federal and state requirements concerning financial aid eligibility, including ability to benefit, is mandatory. Every institution must be vigilant to assure that its programs are appropriately represented to all students. Note: Commission policy holds that each institution determines its own policies and procedures for accepting transfer credits, including credits from accredited and non-accredited institutions, from foreign institutions, and from institutions that grant credit for experiential learning and for non-traditional adult learner programs.
18. **It provides its students access to those learning resources and support services requisite for its degree programs.**	The learning resources referred to in this requirement might differ according to the program. For example, vocational-technical programs cannot succeed without shops and laboratories necessary for effective teaching and learning. Every program requires some use of library resources, broadly defined to include access to information through information networks and computer data bases as well as print media. Similarly, institutions must provide support services for students that might include such things as academic advising and financial aid counseling for all institutions, housing and food services for residential colleges, and support programs for targeted constituencies at many colleges. If the institution does not own these resources, it must show that its students have access to them on a regular, dependable basis.
Finances	
19. **It has an external financial audit by a certified public accountant or a public audit agency at least every two years.**	Not only does the Commission consider an external financial audit as necessary for sound management of an institution, it also relies on such audits to provide important information necessary to the accreditation process. This clarifies the Commission's requirement for certified financial statements with a certified public accountant's opinion to validate the statements prepared by the institution. Where separate audited financial statements are not available because the institution is a component of a larger corporate entity, the institution may satisfy this requirement by providing audited financial statements of the larger organization that include as "Supplemental Information" the financial activity of the institution as separate from the organization. This "Supplemental Information" will have been subjected to the same auditing processes as the basic financial statements.

GIR	Explication
20. Its financial documents demonstrate the appropriate allocation and use of resources to support its educational programs.	A balanced budget does not ensure that the institution adequately supports its educational programs, although both budgets and audits give some evidence of how an institution allocates its resources. Given the complexity of many institutions, other financial documents, such as multi-year comparative statements and long-range plans, might be equally important in explaining the fiscal priorities of the institution.
21. Its financial practices, records, and reports demonstrate fiscal viability.	The Commission looks at budgeting and accounting practices, cash-flow histories and projections, and debt-equity ratios, among other forms of evidence, in determining whether this requirement is met. Institutions that cannot build reserves or that frequently use reserves to balance budgets might not be well-managed financially. Institutions with significant cash-flow problems run the risk of having to declare bankruptcy. Institutions may carry such a heavy debt load that long-term financial health is impossible. Since the Commission's affiliation with an institution should provide to the public some assurance of the institution's long-term stability, the Commission must weigh carefully the institution's financial health.

Public Information

22. Its catalog or other official documents includes its mission statement along with accurate descriptions of ○ its educational programs and degree requirements; ○ its learning resources; ○ its admissions policies and practices; ○ its academic and non-academic policies and procedures directly affecting students; ○ its charges and refund policies; and ○ the academic credentials of its faculty and administrators.	The Commission requires that an institution's publications provide dependable consumer information. The college catalog and the student handbook serve as the primary documents through which a college publishes this important information, although some might use other documents as well. It is critical that the documents are available to the public, and are clear, accurate, and useful to the reader.

GIR	Explication
23. It accurately discloses its standing with accrediting bodies with which it is affiliated.	Just as the Commission requires that its affiliated institutions fairly and accurately represent their affiliation with the Commission, so too does the Commission require that affiliated institutions follow the same practices with all other accrediting bodies. Because the public often confuses the nature and purposes of institutional and specialized accreditation, it is important that institutional disclosure of relationships with both are accurate.
24. It makes available upon request information that accurately describes its financial condition.	Most public and private institutions publish annual financial reports, available to prospective students, to alumni, and to the public at large. This requirement aims at providing assistance to those seeking assurance of the fiscal health of an affiliated institution. An institution must communicate to its publics, in catalogs, viewbooks, or other publications, what financial information is available to the public, and how this information can be obtained.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GIRS AND THE CRITERIA

The General Institutional Requirements (GIRs) describe the primary requirements for affiliation with the Commission. A team evaluating an institution applying for initial candidacy examines carefully whether it meets each GIR, but also explores its ability to meet the five Criteria within its period of candidacy. Since each GIR deals with issues evaluated more demandingly under the Criteria, it is important that both institutions and Consultant-Evaluators understand the relationship between the threshold requirements of the GIRs and the higher expectations embodied in the Criteria.

An institution evaluated for continued candidacy, for initial accreditation, or for continued accreditation continues to document—and Evaluation Teams continue to confirm—that the institution meets the GIRs. In evaluation cycles beginning with 1994-95, member institutions may need to concentrate attention on demonstrating that they meet those GIRs that are new or substantially changed—especially GIRs 9, 10, 15, 16, 18, 21, and 23. However, it is unusual for examination of the GIRs to constitute a large part of the agenda for comprehensive evaluation visits to accredited institutions unless that institution has undergone significant transformation since its last visit. Customarily, an institution's ability to meet the higher expectations of the Criteria forms the focus of visits to candidate and accredited institutions.

Within the accreditation process, the GIRs establish a foundation. The Criteria for Accreditation constitute the frame and structure built on that foundation. Each criterion is related to one or more GIRs, but each goes beyond the basic expectation of the GIRs.

- GIR #1 calls for a mission statement; Criterion One asks for "clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with [the] mission."
- GIR #18 calls for "access to those learning resources and support services requisite for its degree programs"; an institution's discussion of Criterion Two should include evaluation of the adequacy of the learning resources, not just the access to them.
- GIR #16 calls for a "coherent general education program . . . designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and to promote intellectual inquiry"; an institution's discussion of Criterion Three should include evaluation of the effectiveness of that program, not just its design.

The following table suggests the rich variety of relationships between the GIRs and the Criteria.

Criteria for Accreditation	General Institutional Requirement
Criterion One	GIRs #1, 2, 3, 4, 12, 14
Criterion Two	GIRs #5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21
Criterion Three	GIRs #9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 20
Criterion Four	Almost all GIRs relate to this Criterion
Criterion Five	GIRs #3, 6, 8, 17, 22, 23, 24

It is possible for an institution to meet the GIRs and fail to achieve affiliation with the Commission. The programs for candidacy and for accreditation require that an institution both meet the GIRs and fulfill the Criteria for Accreditation (the Candidacy Program explains the extent to which candidate institutions must fulfill the Criteria). Gaining affiliation with the Commission, then, requires more than meeting the Commission's GIRs.

4 The Criteria for Accreditation

WORKING WITH THE PATTERNS OF EVIDENCE

☐ The Introduction of Patterns of Evidence

The purposes of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education have always included both public determinations of institutional quality and encouragement of continual institutional self-improvement. The Commission uses recommendations provided by its Evaluation Teams and review processes to decide whether the institutions it evaluates meet its Criteria for Accreditation. Through its publications and programs, the Commission traditionally has focused the attention of both institutions and Evaluation Teams on those issues and areas of institutional operation that were of general concern throughout the higher education community. To assist further in the evaluation process, the Commission divided the issues examined in each institutional evaluation into broad areas, or Criteria.

In Fall 1992 the Commission approved new Criteria for Accreditation. Following each Criterion in this revision is the phrase–

> "In determining appropriate patterns of evidence for the criterion, the Commission considers evidence such as...."

This statement is followed by a "list of indicators."

Some questions raised by this decision include:

- ◊ Why did the Commission change from the traditional simplicity of its single-sentence Criteria?
- ◊ What is a "pattern"? What is an "indicator"?
- ◊ What does the introduction of these concepts mean for institutions and teams in the accreditation process?

This section provides answers to these and other questions about the application of the Patterns of Evidence.

Patterns and Indicators: An Illustration

Criterion One — **The institution has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education.**

Statement on "Patterns of Evidence" — In determining appropriate patterns of evidence for the criterion, the Commission considers evidence such as:

"List of indicators" related to Criterion One —

a. long- and short-range institutional and educational goals.
b. processes, involving its constituencies, through which the institution evaluates its purposes.
c. decision-making processes that are appropriate to its stated mission and purposes.
d. understanding of the stated purposes by institutional constituencies.
e. efforts to keep the public informed of its institutional and educational goals through documents such as the catalog and program brochures.
f. support for freedom of inquiry for faculty and students.
g. institutional commitment to excellence both in the teaching provided by faculty and the learning expected of students.

☐ The Criteria and the Patterns in the Accreditation Process

Since all five of the Commission's Criteria are critical to overall institutional effectiveness, meeting all five is required for accreditation. The Commission sets high expectations for its member institutions in each area, and judges holistically whether member institutions meet its Criteria. Outstanding performance in an area covered by one Criterion does not compensate for unacceptable performance in another. Consequently, in analyzing an institution to identify its strengths and weaknesses, it is critical that both institutions and evaluators understand what is judged under which Criterion.

The Commission has always examined the overall pattern of evidence relating to each Criterion to determine whether an institution should be accredited. In adopting the Patterns of Evidence, the Commission now provides a formally-approved list of typical areas of institutional activity or concern that relate directly to the satisfaction of each Criterion. These "indicators" illustrate characteristic varieties of evidence that an institution might present in building its case. They also go further in providing a core of important concerns to be considered by every institution and Evaluation Team, an evaluative process that is equitable and fair, and Commission decisions on accreditation that can serve the public as consistent and reliable indicators of institutional quality.

Because the indicators exemplify the issues that most Evaluation Teams will explore with most institutions, most institutions should consider the indicators during the self-study process. However:

- ◊ They are neither "checklists," nor are they exhaustive.
- ◊ They are broad descriptions of the kind of concerns and issues the Commission considers when making a holistic decision on each Criterion.
- ◊ Not every indicator will be critical for every institution; many institutions will want to include additional indicators of their success in fulfilling the Criteria.

☐ What Patterns and Indicators Mean for Institutions

The indicators provide a beginning for self-study and self-evaluation, not a complete formula or recipe for conducting a self-study process. To study itself effectively, an institution must first delineate the range of matters it will address. The indicators help identify issues and concerns common throughout American higher education. In addition to these, an institution may consider issues emerging from its own history and experience; its articulated purposes; and the challenges it has faced, it now faces, or will face in the future.

The report an institution prepares after completing its self-study process serves as the first mechanism by which the Evaluation Team comes to know, understand, and evaluate the institution. Because the Self-Study Report should demonstrate a pattern of evidence concerning each Criterion, it need not present all the evidence the institution has collected. Instead, it should summarize broadly the sources and variety of evidence examined, the means and criteria used to evaluate it, and the conclusions drawn from it. In addition, during the campus visit the institution should be able to make additional evidence that supports its conclusions available to the team.

The introduction of patterns and indicators means in the preparation of its report, that an institution will have to remain aware of the ways in which the team will use the document. The team will read the report to derive its initial impression of the pattern of evidence supporting the institution's claim that it meets each of the Criteria, recognizing where that pattern is questionable, faint, or missing. This impression may influence how the team spends its time during the visit, which of the institution's conclusions it may want to reexamine, and what additional evidence it will wish to see.

In establishing a pattern that supports its conclusion that it satisfies each Criterion, an institution will want to discuss specific indicators that make its case strongest. Similarly, it will want to include discussion of areas of weakness, both to be honest and to ensure credibility. Practiced evaluators know perfect institutions do not exist and can spot undiscussed problems quickly. The institution should understand that the Commission looks at the institution's strengths and weaknesses relating to a particular Criterion together, holistically, balancing them in reaching a judgment. The institution and the Evaluation Team share a responsibility to confront and discuss both pluses and minuses.

An institution should avoid using the list of indicators following each Criterion as a table of contents for its Self-Study Report; a presentation organized around these indicators would be fractured, difficult to follow, and would require extensive cross-referencing. Instead, the discussion addressing each Criterion should aim at describing the institution's conclusions reached in its self-study process and the pattern of evidence that supports that conclusion. Undoubtedly individual indicators must be cited or referenced to support this pattern, but the order and emphasis will differ for every institution. However, the lists of indicators might serve an institution as convenient indices to confirm the breadth of coverage in its report.

What Patterns and Indicators Mean for Evaluation Teams

To make effective use of this new approach, Evaluation Team members must read the Self-Study Report with at least three goals in mind.

- First, they must see whether the report provides preliminary assurance (to be confirmed when they visit the campus) that the self-study process was, indeed, serious, comprehensive, and designed and executed in a way that could help the institution to discover its strengths, its concerns, and its opportunities for continuing self-improvement.

- Second, the Evaluation Team determines from the Self-Study Report whether a convincing pattern of evidence is present to support the institution's contention that it satisfies each of the five Criteria for Accreditation. From the report, the team will identify indicators whose accuracy they may question or corroborate during their campus visit. Often, judicious sampling of evidence can establish a pattern of veracity and consistency that makes more tedious checking unnecessary.

- Third, and most important, the Evaluation Team must determine whether the conclusions the institution drew from its own examination of the evidence are warranted—and whether the team concurs with the institution's appraisal.

An institution should not defend its weaknesses by pointing to member institutions with equal (or worse) deficiencies, nor should an Evaluation Team ignore a problem because other institutions with similar or more serious problems are accredited. As expectations for the Commission's higher education community rise, the decisions it makes will reflect those higher expectations—even if, as a result, it becomes obvious that there are institutions currently accredited by the Commission that would have some difficulty meeting the higher requirements were they evaluated today.

To make a negative recommendation, a team must identify its concerns, clearly and specifically, showing how the pattern of evidence fails to demonstrate that the institution fulfills one or more Criteria. In doing so, individual evaluators will question the institution's presentation of its case in its Self-Study Report. They will be guided in part by the indicators. But they will also go beyond the Self-Study Report, asking about aspects of institutional culture and operation that the institution may not have discussed explicitly. Sometimes these questions will relate to particular indicators listed after the Criterion; sometimes they will grow out of the evaluator's personal experience—at a home institution or on other evaluation visits.

Contexts Shaping the Patterns of Evidence

In the Commission's work, institutions and evaluators examine indicators within several larger internal and external contexts.

◇ **What the institution itself articulates as its mission, purposes, and objectives.**

Institutions publicly dedicate themselves to particular purposes—from "sharpening minds" to "preparing students for jobs" to "improving society." Not only will the Commission scrutinize an institution's goals in light of their appropriateness to the values of higher education, but it will also examine institutional activities and achievements in light of those intentions.

◇ **How well the institution has progressed since its last evaluation.**

The Commission takes seriously its belief that continuous improvement is a real goal of the accreditation process; therefore, institutions may be measured against their own history. Concerns identified during previous evaluations should be corrected and strengths preserved.

◇ **What is generally recognized as good practice at similar or "peer" institutions.**

Often a particular aspect of an institution can be evaluated best by comparing it with the corresponding feature of similar institutions. For example, in judging the appropriateness of faculty development, or library, or student services, an institution or an Evaluation Team may look at good practice among whatever group of peer institutions is appropriate. If regional differences are significant, comparison may be with rural institutions, urban institutions, or multi-campus colleges. Comparison should consider a peer group of institutions that face conditions similar to those at the institution under review.

◇ **What is deemed appropriate among all of the higher education institutions the Commission accredits.**

On many matters, the peer group for comparison may be the entire group of nearly 1,000 U.S. colleges and universities accredited by the Commission. Regarding issues such as the involvement of faculty in the establishment and review of programs, support for free and open inquiry, or the critical centrality of the general education program in undergraduate education, shared expectations and values exist throughout the higher education community. However, the Commission will scrutinize an institution's goals in light of their appropriateness, looking at whether they are in harmony with the values higher education traditionally places on such matters.

Conclusion

In summary, the notion of basing accreditation judgments on a pattern of evidence is not a new one. In employing the revised Criteria for Accreditation, however, both institutions and Evaluation Teams should find that they work differently than in the past. The revision of the Criteria—the important changes in Criteria Three and Four and the addition of Criterion Five—together with the Commission's list of indicators for each Criterion's pattern should help both institutions and Consultant-Evaluators agree on those concerns that form the core of each Criterion. Institutions will find it easier to anticipate what the Commission expects and how it will judge its findings; teams will find it easier to communicate with institutions as they jointly support the evaluation process.

THE CRITERIA FOR ACCREDITATION

An institution accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools meets these Criteria for Accreditation.

Criteria for Accreditation	Patterns of Evidence
Criterion One	
The institution has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education.	*In determining appropriate patterns of evidence for this criterion, the Commission considers evidence such as:* a. long- and short-range institutional and educational goals. b. processes, involving its constituencies, through which the institution evaluates its purposes. c. decision-making processes that are appropriate to its stated mission and purposes. d. understanding of the stated purposes by institutional constituencies. e. efforts to keep the public informed of its institutional and educational goals through documents such as the catalog and program brochures. f. support for freedom of inquiry for faculty and students. g. institutional commitment to excellence in both the teaching provided by faculty and the learning expected of students.
Criterion Two	
The institution has effectively organized the human, financial, and physical resources necessary to accomplish its purposes.	*In determining appropriate patterns of evidence for this criterion, the Commission considers evidence such as:* a. governance by a board consisting of informed people who understand their responsibilities, function in accordance with stated board policies, and have the resolve necessary to preserve the institution's integrity. b. effective administration through well-defined and understood organizational structures, policies, and procedures. c. qualified and experienced administrative personnel who oversee institutional activities and exercise appropriate responsibility for them. d. systems of governance that provide dependable information to the institution's constituencies and, as appropriate, involve them in the decision-making processes. e. faculty with educational credentials that testify to appropriate preparation for the courses they teach. f. a sufficient number of students enrolled to meet the institution's stated educational purposes. g. provision of services that afford all admitted students the opportunity to succeed. h. a physical plant that supports effective teaching and learning. i. conscientious efforts to provide students with a safe and healthy environment. j. academic resources and equipment (e.g., libraries, electronic services and products, learning resource centers, laboratories and studios, computers) adequate to support the institution's purposes.

Criteria for Accreditation	Patterns of Evidence
	k. a pattern of financial expenditures that shows the commitment to provide both the environment and the human resources necessary for effective teaching and learning. l. management of financial resources to maximize the institution's capability to meet its purposes.
Criterion Three The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes.	*In determining appropriate patterns of evidence for this criterion, the Commission considers evidence such as:* a. educational programs appropriate to an institution of higher education. – courses of study in the academic programs that are clearly defined, coherent, and intellectually rigorous; – programs that include courses and/or activities whose purpose is to stimulate the examination and understanding of personal, social, and civic values; – programs that require of the faculty and students (as appropriate to the level of the educational program) the use of scholarship and/or the participation in research as part of the programs; – programs that require intellectual interaction between student and faculty and encourage it between student and student. b. assessment of appropriate student academic achievement in all its programs, documenting: – proficiency in skills and competencies essential for all college-educated adults; – completion of an identifiable and coherent undergraduate level general education component; and – mastery of the level of knowledge appropriate to the degree granted. c. transcripts that accurately reflect student learning and follow commonly accepted practices. d. effective teaching that characterizes its courses and academic programs. e. ongoing support for professional development for faculty, staff, and administrators. f. student services that effectively support the institution's purposes. g. staff and faculty service that contributes to the institution's effectiveness. h. if appropriate: – evidence of support for the stated commitment to basic and applied research through provision of sufficient human, financial, and physical resources to produce effective research; – evidence of support for the stated commitment to the fine and creative arts through provision of sufficient human, financial, and physical resources to produce creative endeavors and activities;

Criteria for Accreditation	Patterns of Evidence
	– evidence of effective delivery of educational and other services to its community; – evidence of development and offering of effective courses and programs to meet the needs of its sponsoring organization and other special constituencies.
Criterion Four The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness.	*In determining appropriate patterns of evidence for this criterion, the Commission considers evidence such as:* a. a current resource base—financial, physical, and human—that positions the institution for the future. b. decision-making processes with tested capability of responding effectively to anticipated and unanticipated challenges to the institution. c. structured assessment processes that are continuous, that involve a variety of institutional constituencies, and that provide meaningful and useful information to the planning processes as well as to students, faculty, and administration. d. plans as well as ongoing, effective planning processes necessary to the institution's continuance. e. resources organized and allocated to support its plans for strengthening both the institution and its programs.
Criterion Five The institution demonstrates integrity in its practices and relationships.	*In determining appropriate patterns of evidence for this criterion, the Commission considers evidence such as:* a. student, faculty, and staff handbooks that describe various institutional relationships with those constituencies, including appropriate grievance procedures. b. policies and practices for the resolution of internal disputes within the institution's constituency. c. policies and practices consistent with its mission related to equity of treatment, nondiscrimination, affirmative action, and other means of enhancing access to education and the building of a diverse educational community. d. institutional publications, statements, and advertising that describe accurately and fairly the institution, its operations, and its programs. e. relationships with other institutions of higher education conducted ethically and responsibly. f. appropriate support for resources shared with other institutions. g. policies and procedures regarding institutional relationships with and responsibility for intercollegiate athletics, student associations, and subsidiary or related business enterprises. h. oversight processes for monitoring contractual arrangements with government, industry, and other organizations.

FOCUS ON CRITERION ONE

"The institution has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education."

☐ Commission Definition of "Purposes" and "Consistent"

"Purposes" refers to the multiple and specific ends the institution intends to achieve in order to carry out its more general "mission." Most institutions have broad, general statements of mission that are relatively brief. Statements of purposes—of long- and short-range institutional goals—are more specific and detailed. Usually qualitative or quantitative measures can speak to their accomplishment.

"Consistent" means that the stated purposes are directly related to the stated mission. For example, part of an institution's mission might be "to meet the educational needs of the community"; a related purpose might be "to assure that working adults have access to effective vocational and technical programs."

When the Commission uses "publicly-stated purposes," it means purposes that are written, published, and generally available to all constituencies. It also means those specific ends for which an institution is willing to be held accountable. Although the Commission historically has used the term "stated purposes" to describe this level of specificity, some institutions choose to use "goals" or "objectives" instead. Some long-range and strategic planning endeavors also use these terms instead of "stated purposes."

☐ Commission Meaning of "Appropriate to an Institution of Higher Education"

The Commission intends to assure that its affiliated institutions have purposes that

- ◊ affirm for faculty and students the freedom of inquiry basic to the intellectual vitality of institutions of higher education;
- ◊ explain the particular combination of academic programs provided by the institution;
- ◊ speak clearly to the learning expected of students;
- ◊ support the commitment to educational breadth and depth typical of institutions of higher education; and
- ◊ commit the institution to the excellence in teaching expected of institutions of higher education.

By replacing the word "postsecondary" with "higher education" in its latest revision of this criterion, the Commission defines with greater clarity than before its expectation that affiliated institutions, through their publicly-stated purposes, share educational goals and values common to other institutions of higher education.

☐ The Role of "Stated Purposes" in the Accreditation Process

The Commission's accreditation processes measure an institution not against its broadly-stated mission, but, instead, against its more specifically-stated "purposes." The second, third, and fourth Criteria for Accreditation are built on the foundation established in this first criterion: the word "purposes," not the word "mission," is found in each of them.

a. long- and short-range institutional and educational goals.

b. processes, involving its constituencies, through which the institution evaluates its purposes.

c. decision-making processes that are appropriate to its stated mission and purposes.

d. understanding of the stated purposes by institutional constituencies.

e. efforts to keep the public informed of its institutional and educational goals through documents such as the catalog and program brochures.

f. support for freedom of inquiry for faculty and students.

g. institutional commitment to excellence in both the teaching provided by faculty and the learning expected of students.

☐ Other Types of Evidence Appropriate for This Criterion

Institutions of higher education are often in different states of maturity and development. Some undergo historic changes in response to changing demographic or economic forces. Some move from an emphasis on training to an emphasis on education. Some move from traditional forms of educational delivery to use of various types of distance delivery within the service area, the state, the nation, and, for a few, the world. Because of these differences, there may be other types of evidence beyond those enumerated above to support the institution's claim that it meets this criterion.

Some examples:

◊ A developing institution has unevenly prepared faculty. Institutional support for the professional development of its faculty might be evidence that the institution is committed to the values of higher education, namely its recognition that the faculty's ability to provide quality higher education is related to the faculty's level of higher education.

◊ A public or religious institution is trying to assure that its various constituencies agree upon and understand the institution's mission and purposes. Involvement in the processes of legislative or deliberative bodies charged with defining institutional mission and purposes might be important evidence to confirm this commitment.

◊ An institution has limited resources. Institutional participation in consortia or cooperative higher education ventures intended to provide access to greater learning resources and course offerings might be important evidence to suggest the institution's commitment to excellence in teaching and learning.

◊ An institution is responding to external and internal changes in the circumstances affecting that institution. Institutional revision of its publicly-stated purposes as a result of the self-study process might be important evidence that it has acted responsibly toward its constituencies by acknowledging those changes and rethinking its original goals.

☐ Weighing Types of Evidence in Determining Whether This Criterion Is Met

In the universe of institutions of higher education affiliated with the Commission, some institutions have specific purposes, the accomplishment of which is absolutely critical to carrying out their mission. Moreover,

The Commission assumes that statements of mission and purposes guide institutional planning and budgeting and provide a framework for governance, administration, and communication. They are reflected in every aspect of the institution and its activities, such as admissions and retention policies; curricular and extracurricular programs; hiring, retention, tenure, and promotion of faculty; institutional organizational structure; and financial and physical resources.

Although stated purposes should be flexible enough to allow an institution to respond to new challenges and opportunities, they should be firm enough to allow it to resist haphazard growth or retrenchment. Moreover, they should be clearly stated and precise enough to allow the institution, its constituencies, and the Commission, to measure, either qualitatively or quantitatively, how well the institution achieves them.

☐ Institutional Self-Study and Team Evaluation for This Criterion

Every institutional self-study process should involve an evaluation of the institution's statement of mission and purposes. Sometimes the self-study process becomes an avenue through which the statement is amended, even recast. Considering the central nature of stated purposes to the total accrediting process, institutional self-studies should not treat them lightly. They should go beyond simply quoting the statements from the catalog or from the legislation that established the institution.

Determining whether an institution's purposes are "clear and publicly stated" involves more than judging the intelligibility of their wording or determining where and how they are published and disseminated. It also involves determining whether

- ◊ the statement of purposes flows from the statement of mission,
- ◊ the statement of purposes supports the values of higher education,
- ◊ there seems to be among the institution's various constituents a common understanding of the purposes of the institution, and/or
- ◊ the statement of purposes informs decision-making at the institution.

Every Self-Study Report must include the institution's stated mission and purposes. But the self-study process, through which the institution conducts an evaluation of those statements, might take a variety of forms.

Some examples:

- ◊ An institution recently has completed a major study and revision of its statements of mission and purposes. The Self-Study Report should discuss the reasons for and merits of that recent revision.
- ◊ An institution has not revised its statements in several years. The self-study process might focus on an institution-wide review of the existing statements allowing for new or revised statements to emerge (if necessary to ensure consensus).

☐ Pattern of Evidence Supporting This Criterion

Because of the Commission's basic assumption about the important role of stated purposes in the life of an institution, the institutional self-study process and its subsequent report should take particular care in formulating a response to Criterion One. **In developing the pattern of evidence supporting this criterion, the Commission suggests the breadth of evaluation that it considers appropriate to this foundational criterion.**

it is possible that not all stated purposes are of equal significance to the health and vitality of an institution. Within the accrediting process, institutions and Evaluation Teams must weigh carefully and openly the spoken or unspoken priority among stated purposes as they relate to the institution's mission.

Some examples:

- A single-purpose institution offers professional programs, the graduates of which must be licensed by the state or federal government. It might have as a stated purpose "assuring that graduates will be prepared for appropriate licensure." The institution's ability to fulfill that specific purpose is central to its continuance.
- An institution is established to educate the religious leadership of its sponsoring denomination. It might have stated purposes capturing that responsibility. The institution's ability to maintain its denominational commitments will be critical to its success.
- An institution is committed to developing quality alternative forms of educational delivery. It might have that commitment as one stated purpose. The institution's ability to document the quality of its alternate forms of program delivery will be key to its long-term credibility.
- A public institution is charged with meeting state-wide needs. It might state those purposes explicitly. The institution's willingness and capacity to fulfill that responsibility should receive special attention.

FOCUS ON CRITERION TWO

"The institution has effectively organized the human, financial, and physical resources necessary to accomplish its purposes."

☐ Commission Meaning of "Effectively Organized"

In using the words "effectively organized," the Commission refers in part to the governance and administrative structures and processes at an institution. In light of the diversity of institutions of higher education, however, "effectively organized" does not refer to specific structures or to specific processes that must be found in all institutions.

Some examples:

- Committee structures typical of undergraduate and four-year liberal arts colleges might overwhelm a small single-purpose institution.
- Unionized institutions might develop structures that vary significantly from those found in non-unionized institutions.

The Commission also refers to the ways in which an institution, through its governing and decision-making structures, actually organizes certain resources.

Some examples:

- Demonstrating that financial resources "are effectively organized" will require both a review of budgets and audits and a study of the total decision-making processes related to how an institution derives and spends its money.

- Demonstrating that physical resources "are effectively organized" will require something other than a description of each building. It also will include a study of how an institution evaluates the conditions and usefulness of its physical resources for its academic programs, including short-term resources, such as computer facilities, and long-term resources, such as buildings and laboratories.

Therefore, the operative definition of "effectively organized" within the accrediting process includes the requirements established in the General Institutional Requirements, and is shaped by the common understandings within the higher education community of the structures and processes that contribute to effective governance, administration, and communication.

While it is appropriate that institutions establish their own operative definitions of effective organization, the Commission may or may not find those definitions appropriate to an institution of higher education.

Some examples:

- Because the Commission has determined in its General Institutional Requirements that each affiliated institution will have a governing board capable of protecting the integrity of the institution, it will be impossible for an institution that has a board with no authority to claim that it is "effectively organized."

- Because the higher education community places a high value on shared governance, it will be impossible for an institution that no structures for appropriate faculty role in institutional decision-making to claim that it is "effectively organized."

☐ Commission Meaning of "Necessary"

In assessing whether the institution has obtained and organized "necessary" resources, the Commission is not guided by mathematical formulas. If an institution cannot accomplish its stated purposes without certain resources, then those resources are clearly "necessary."

Some examples:

- The faculty and physical plant necessary for a private institution offering seven degree programs to 400 students will be different from those resources necessary for a comprehensive state institution that offers scores of degrees to thousands of students.

- The institution with a small campus and a small full-time enrollment but with many part-time students scattered over a sizable geographic area will need a significantly different configuration of resources than a residential college that offers no off-campus instruction.

While it is appropriate that institutions establish their own operative definitions of the resources necessary for their purposes, the Commission may or may not find those definitions to be appropriate to an institution of higher education.

Some examples:

- The Commission has determined in its General Institutional Requirements that each affiliated institution must have some full-time faculty. Therefore, an institution cannot expect the Commission to accept an operating definition of "necessary" that assumes that part-time faculty alone will fulfill this criterion.

- It is commonly understood in the higher education community that sound baccalaureate education requires student use of libraries and laboratories. Therefore, an institution cannot expect the Commission to accept an operating definition of "necessary" that assumes that baccalaureate education can be accomplished with no use of libraries and laboratories.

☐ The Role of Resources and Their Organization in the Accreditation Process

The type and nature of resources, and the organization of those resources, will vary among accreditable institutions of higher education. However, the fact remains that for an institution to achieve its purposes, there should be adequate human, financial, and physical resources and an effective decision-making and administrative apparatus for organizing and deploying all three. Providing evidence that the institution meets this criterion is critical to the accrediting process.

Some examples:

- ◊ Credentials and experience as well as numbers figure prominently in determining the appropriateness of administrators, faculty, and support staff; commitment and resolve as well as reputation play a major role in determining the appropriateness of trustees or regents; preparation and commitment as well as numbers speak to the fit between the student body and the institution.

- ◊ While a direct relationship may not exist between square footage of classroom space and the effectiveness of teaching and learning in that space, a physical plant that cannot accommodate an institution's students or cannot house specially-equipped space necessary for the institution's programs can diminish the educational effectiveness of the institution.

- ◊ A financially solvent institution might have a weak financial core—a poorly-funded endowment, a large institution-supported amount of financial aid, a reliance on soft money programs or short-term grants, an electorate that refuses to pass millage or a state legislature diminishing expected state support—which puts its future resources base at risk.

☐ Institutional Self-Study and Team Evaluation for This Criterion

To demonstrate that it has met Criterion Two, an institution must have adequate basic data. Unless an institution has an accurate accounting of its resources, it cannot begin to evaluate whether they are adequate to its needs. So, for this criterion, an institutional self-study process will usually begin with an initial effort to gather dependable data. For some institutions, much data might be available in reports prepared by the institutional research officer; but in many institutions, the appropriate data must be gathered from a variety of offices—admissions, student affairs, personnel/human resources, financial aid, comptroller's office, and offices of academic deans or department chairs. The process of identifying and collecting that information—and of supplementing it when it is missing or insufficient—will be part of the effort to collect the evidence needed for Criterion Two.

Determining whether an institution has the "necessary" resources and whether they are "effectively organized" to accomplish the institution's purposes, involves more than counting resources and finding the charters, bylaws, and manuals that outline governing structures; it also involves determining whether

- ◊ the decision-making, administrative, and communications structures and processes are well-understood and appropriately used by the institution's constituencies;

- ◊ each of the various human resources is appropriate to the institution's purposes;

- ◊ the economic strength of the institution is sufficient to undergird appropriately all of the institution's programs and activities;

- ◊ the institution's means of obtaining income and its distribution of human, financial, and physical resources reflect values consistent with those widely held by institutions of higher education.

Often in the self-study process, these four critically important determinations prove difficult to establish, especially if the self-study process involves participation by representatives of all the institution's constituencies. For example, not all faculty are literate in institutional finance, nor are people responsible for student services always knowledgeable about appropriate instructional labs. However, one goal of the self-study process should be to engage a variety of constituents in understanding and evaluating all of the institution's resources. It is important, therefore, that time and instruction be provided so that all who participate in the self-study can be effective.

Finances can be especially challenging, for while the bottom line of the institution's financial sheet might suggest economic well-being, it is possible that the institution is underfunding some programs in order to support others or that it is not investing in long-range needs, such as maintenance of the physical plant or updating of the library collection.

☐ Pattern of Evidence Supporting This Criterion

The institutional self-study process and its subsequent report should review a broad variety of matters. **In developing the pattern of evidence supporting this criterion, the Commission suggests the breadth of evaluation that it considers appropriate to it.**

a. governance by a board consisting of informed people who understand their responsibilities, function in accordance with stated board policies, and have the resolve necessary to preserve the institution's integrity.

b. effective administration through well-defined and understood organizational structures, policies, and procedures.

c. qualified and experienced administrative personnel who oversee institutional activities and exercise appropriate responsibility for them.

d. systems of governance that provide dependable information to the institution's constituencies and, as appropriate, involve them in the decision-making processes.

e. faculty with educational credentials that testify to appropriate preparation for the courses they teach.

f. a sufficient number of students enrolled to meet the institution's stated educational purposes.

g. provision of services that afford all admitted students the opportunity to succeed.

h. a physical plant that supports effective teaching and learning.

i. conscientious efforts to provide students with a safe and healthy environment.

j. academic resources and equipment (e.g., libraries, electronic services and products, learning resource centers, laboratories and studios, computers) adequate to support the institution's purposes.

k. a pattern of financial expenditures that shows the commitment to provide both the environment and the human resources necessary for effective teaching and learning.

l. management of financial resources to maximize the institution's capability to meet its purposes.

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☐ Other Types of Evidence Appropriate for This Criterion

Most institutions will have some purposes common to all institutions of higher education. But many will differ from one another enough that they must use other types of evidence to demonstrate that they meet this criterion.

Some examples

- An institution has experienced rifts among the trustees, the President, and faculty. Institutional efforts to develop new avenues for intra-institutional communication might be important evidence to suggest the institution's commitment to foster more effective structures of organizational communication.
- An institution is facing cuts in state allocations. Institutional initiatives utilizing new technologies to provide learning and support services might be important evidence to suggest the institution's efforts to find new operational definitions of "necessary" and "effective" in a period of fiscal constraint.
- An institution recently has emphasized building new facilities. Institutional reallocation of resources to development, to student enrollment management, or to automation of the library might be important evidence to suggest the institution's commitment to strengthening neglected areas.
- An institution has revised its decision-making and administrative structures and processes resulting from the self-study process. It might be important evidence that the institution has become more aware of the importance of participatory governance or more effective administration, or has recognized ways it could make its present organization and processes more effective.

☐ Weighing Types of Evidence in Determining Whether This Criterion Is Met

The stated purposes of the institution and the present opportunities and challenges facing it will determine not only the types of evidence provided but also the relative importance assigned to each by the institution itself and by the Evaluation Team.

Some examples

- A public institution has recently lost a significant portion of its state support. It might need to develop new sources of funding through mounting a capital campaign or marketing its educational services at additional sites. The institution's ability to find new financial resources in these circumstances will be central to its continuance.
- A community college, without involving its faculty, decided to initiate new off-campus programs to increase student numbers and tuition income. The institution's ability to regain faculty ownership of the extension educational programs will be an important test of its organizational effectiveness.
- A church-related institution is closely affiliated with a denomination. It might be negatively affected by tensions within the supporting denominational body. The institution's ability to insulate its governance structures from the denomination's influence will be essential to its board's ability to protect the autonomy of the institution, hence its fiscal stability and educational integrity.
- An institution offers programs that are technology dependent. It might find that its present financial resources are inadequate for modifying its physical plant and obtaining the equipment required by rapid changes in technology. The institution's ability to reassign a greater share of present resources to these programs, to obtain additional funding, or to find alternate and dependable access to that technology will be critical to its ability to support the programs effectively.

FOCUS ON CRITERION THREE

"The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes."

☐ Commission Meaning of "Educational Purposes"

Criterion Three reflects the Commission's primary emphasis upon the educational purposes of its affiliated institutions. The diverse group of institutions affiliated with the Commission has a myriad of stated purposes, but all of them have specific educational purposes. Those should translate both into coherent and appropriate educational offerings and into programs of assessment to determine the effectiveness of those offerings.

In interpreting both the new General Institutional Requirements and Criteria for Accreditation, it is important to recall the Commission's revised mission statement in which "postsecondary education" is replaced by "higher education." The change to "higher education" indicates that within the broader universe of postsecondary educational enterprises, the Commission accepts as affiliated institutions only those that share the values of higher education and endeavor to capture those values in the educational programs they offer. Higher education does more than train or certify skills, the goals of many excellent postsecondary institutions. Higher education requires students not only to master a rigorous body of knowledge, but also to conceptualize, analyze, and integrate. Additionally, higher education

- ◊ requires students to use their intellect,
- ◊ stimulates students to examine their values,
- ◊ teaches students the importance of considering divergent views as expressed in research, and
- ◊ challenges students to engage each other and their teachers in a free exchange of ideas and attitudes.

The Commission anticipates not only that an institution's stated educational purposes reflect a shared commitment to these values, but also that its educational programs provide strong evidence that the commitment is acted upon.

☐ Commission Meaning of "Other Purposes"

The Commission recognizes that almost all institutions of higher education have a variety of purposes to fulfill other than those directly related to teaching and learning. Those "other purposes" might relate directly to public expectations of the institution or to specific commitments to the sponsoring or funding entity. Some of those purposes could be dictated by broad wording within the institutional mission.

Some examples:

- ◊ An institution with an educational mission shaped by its religious affiliation might have the stated purpose of transmitting a specific doctrine.
- ◊ An institution with a strong professional program might have the stated purpose of assuring that students gain specific skills required for licensure in that profession.
- ◊ Public institutions might have the stated purpose of contributing to the economic development of the city or state or providing a variety of services to the people in a specific geographical area.
- ◊ Research universities might have stated purposes concerning the support of theoretical and applied research.

It will be important for the institution to state these "other purposes" and to provide evidence that it is effectively fulfilling them. Since these "other purposes" will differ from institution to institution, it is not possible to provide generic examples of the information that would best document such achievement.

The Role of Assessment in This Criterion

The pattern of evidence for Criterion Three both highlights and reemphasizes the Commission's commitment to the use of assessment in evaluating and improving the educational programs of its affiliated institutions.

While it might appear in this revision of Criterion Three that assessment is simply one of a variety of types of evidence that might be used by the institution to prove that it fulfills this criterion, the Commission has said that assessment plans and programs are expected of all affiliated institutions.

An appropriate pattern of evidence **must** include evidence that the institution documents the academic achievement of its students.

A Brief Historical Note

In its Statement on Assessment and Student Academic Achievement in October 1989, the Commission called on all of its institutions to develop programs by which they could document the academic achievement of their students. In the ensuing years, the Commission implemented this expectation through a series of training programs and written materials and through timelines for all institutions whether they will host a Commission evaluation visit before or after 1995. The Commission grounded its assessment initiative within the previous third criterion for accreditation, and the initiative remains firmly imbedded in this revision.

Institutions, within their Self-Study Reports, must describe and evaluate their assessment program. Teams, in the Team Report, must judge the effectiveness or potential effectiveness of that program. Evaluation Teams will never make a critical decision about an institution's affiliation with the Commission **solely** on the basis of the institution's program of educational assessment.

The Role of General Education in This Criterion

General Institutional Requirement #16 calls for general education "consistent with" an institution's mission and "designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and to promote intellectual inquiry." By including general education as evidence appropriate to documenting that an institution meets this criterion, the Commission reemphasizes that all undergraduate degree programs must include general education. Moreover, the suggested pattern of evidence, in addition to asking for documentable achievement that reflects "an identifiable and coherent undergraduate general education component," also suggests some other types of evidence that speak to the goals of general education:

- a clearly defined statement of philosophy and objective of its general education requirements;
- courses that "stimulate the examination and understanding of personal, social, and civic values";
- courses that ensure "proficiency in skills and competencies essential for all college-educated adults."

- **Ways to describe a general education program.** If a general education program is based on **curricular patterns,** basic areas of academic study would typically include, but not be limited to Communication, Mathematics, Humanities, Behavioral or Social Sciences, Natural Science, and Computer Literacy. If a general education program is based on **cognitive experiences,** it will typically describe its program in terms of the college-level experiences that engender such competencies as the following:

- ◊ **Capabilities in** reading, writing, speaking, listening; abstract inquiry; critical thinking; logical reasoning
- ◊ **Understanding of** numerical data, scientific inquiry, global issues, historical perspectives, literary and/or philosophical, expression of ideas
- ◊ **Development of** ethical perspectives, cultural diversity value systems
- ◊ **Appreciation for** fine and performing arts

Different types of institutions typically establish different objectives for general education.

Some examples:

- ◊ A two-year institution whose curriculum is largely technical in nature typically emphasizes the applied aspects of general education (writing, problem solving, decision making, adapting to change, interpersonal skills) that have, historically, prepared graduates both for careers and for continuing education.
- ◊ A four-year institution with an historic emphasis on the liberal arts typically strives to ensure that its students have a broad range of intellectual experiences that provide the context for advanced and specialized studies.

- **General education in unique institutional contexts.** As higher education changes, so too, do the ways in which institutions provide strong general education programs.

Some examples:

- ◊ A single-purpose, professional institution might contract with a state university or a private institution to provide the general education courses it requires its students to take.
- ◊ A state might mandate that all or part of the general education components of degree programs be provided by neighboring or "related" institutions.
- ◊ A small college might turn to components of the general education program available through purchased curricula (e.g., PBS) or consortia-based curricula.

However, the fact that the general education faculty might not be on the campus does not diminish the need for the institution to "own" the general education program. It is critical that a faculty demonstrate control over the general education program it prescribes for its students through such means as shared committee oversight, institution-developed means of assessing the effectiveness of the general education program, and strong faculty commitment to the role of general education within the overall curriculum.

☐ The Role of Accomplishment of Purposes in the Accreditation Process

This criterion, by specifically mentioning "educational and other purposes," makes clear that the evaluation of the quality of the curricula, teaching, and learning at an institution is central to the accreditation process. In part the evaluation rests on the structure and content of the curricula and the effectiveness of the instruction offered by the institution's faculty; in part it rests on the documentable academic achievement of the students who complete the curricula. If assessment is to have any real impact on higher education, it must directly link student achievement to both the structure and content of the educational program and to the effectiveness of teaching. That is why the Commission ensured that this revised Criterion Three includes both teaching and learning.

For the Commission, then, "institutional effectiveness" is much broader in scope than "educational effectiveness." The language of Criterion Three reflects the Commission's practice of basing accrediting decisions on how well an institution accomplishes *all* of its purposes, through the use of the words "educational and other purposes." Thus, evaluation of overall institutional effectiveness is dependent upon the institution's documentation of how well it is accomplishing not only its educational purposes, but also all other purposes and objectives needed in order to fulfill its mission.

Documenting that the institution is accomplishing its goals and purposes goes far toward answering public calls for institutional accountability. The Commission itself shares the public concern as to whether institutions actually do what they claim to do. The Commission must therefore follow an accrediting process that includes a significant component of institutional accountability. Obviously, then, the accrediting process weighs carefully the adequacy of the evidence provided by an institution to support the claim that it "is accomplishing its educational and other purposes."

☐ Institutional Self-Study and Team Evaluation for This Criterion

For an institution to determine whether it is accomplishing its purposes, its Self-Study Report should do more than provide institutional research documents, program review reports, and some community and student surveys. Documentation for "accomplishment" involves determining whether the institution

- ◊ understands both its central educational purposes and the information necessary to confirm that it achieves them,
- ◊ understands the values of higher education and can show that its activities successfully reflect and transmit those values,
- ◊ both understands and strives to fulfill all of its various stated purposes, and
- ◊ understands the relationship between its resources and programs and its achievements.

A thorough self-study process examines the structure and nature of the institution's educational programs. For years many institutions have accomplished this through periodic program review. Whether implemented to meet state requirements or initiated to enhance internal decision-making, program review constitutes an important step in this evaluation process. However, rather than merely describing the resources supporting a program, the Self-Study Report should evaluate the outcomes of the program. Rather than using student achievement figures only as evidence of the strength of the program, the results of the institution's assessment of student academic achievement should provide constituencies a way to learn about the actual effectiveness of the teaching and learning within the program.

Assessment is one of the most important ways to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning. The Commission's expectation for assessment of student academic achievement is clearly outlined in Chapter 14. Because of the Commission's initiative on assessment, every self-study process will need to pay special attention to how the institution is developing its assessment program.

Program review and student assessment provide two of the most important means of documenting accomplishment of an institution's educational objectives. But they are not the only important signs of an institutional commitment to educational effectiveness.

Some examples:

- ◊ An institution is committed to support basic research that will develop new knowledge. It may wish to submit lists of faculty publications, awards faculty have received for their contributions to research, and grants given to faculty and students for independent study or creative activity.

- An institution affiliated with religious bodies may have purposes directly related to the requirements of those bodies, especially in terms of expected behaviors. The institution may wish to document how well these behaviors, values, and/or attitudes have been acquired by its students.

- An institution may have as a stated purpose meeting the instructional and cultural needs of its immediate community. An institution with such a purpose might provide confirmation from community agencies or industries that specific academic programs or not-for-credit instruction have been designed to meet those needs.

- An institution could have as a stated purpose the efficient delivery of quality educational programs through the utilization of distance and interactive technology. Such technology affects planning and budgets. An institution's capacity to offer effective programs will in part be shaped by the investment it makes to ensure the integrity of those programs, as well as its investment of time and energy into structures that tap and harness the talents of many institutional constituencies on behalf of the institution.

Because higher education is concerned with the personal development and well-being of the student, this criterion also includes the accomplishment of stated purposes concerning student support services. How purposes of this nature will be evaluated will differ from institution to institution.

Some examples

- At some institutions the collegiate experience is structured to ensure that the development of religious, civic, and/or philosophical values occurs.

- Many institutions assist students to gain access to and to use a variety of social and psychological services that will support the students' transitions while at college.

The accomplishment of stated purposes concerning student services and student support must be evaluated. Even in a time of heightened concern about the educational effectiveness of institutions of higher education, attention must be given to these and other significant purposes.

Pattern of Evidence Supporting This Criterion

As the previous discussion suggests, the institutional self-study process and its subsequent report should review a considerable variety of materials. **In developing the pattern of evidence supporting this criterion, the Commission suggests the breadth of review that it considers appropriate to this criterion.**

a. educational programs appropriate to an institution of higher education:

   - courses of study in the academic programs that are clearly defined, coherent, and intellectually rigorous;
   - programs that include courses and/or activities whose purpose is to stimulate the examination and understanding of personal, social, and civic values;
   - programs that require of the faculty and students (as appropriate to the level of the educational program) the use of scholarship and/or the participation in research as part of the programs;
   - programs that require intellectual interaction between student and faculty and encourage it between student and student.

b. assessment of appropriate student academic achievement in all its programs, documenting:

   - proficiency in skills and competencies essential for all college-educated adults;
   - completion of an identifiable and coherent undergraduate level general education component; and
   - mastery of the level of knowledge appropriate to the degree attained.

c. transcripts that accurately reflect student learning and follow commonly accepted practices.

d. effective teaching that characterizes its courses and academic programs.

e. ongoing support for professional development for faculty, staff, and administrators.

f. student services that effectively support the institution's purposes.

g. staff and faculty service that contributes to the institution's effectiveness.

h. if appropriate:

   - evidence of support for the stated commitment to basic and applied research through provision of sufficient human, financial, and physical resources to produce effective research;
   - evidence of support for the stated commitment to the fine and creative arts through provision of sufficient human, financial, and physical resources to produce creative endeavors and activities;
   - evidence of effective delivery of educational and other services to its community;
   - evidence of development and offering of effective courses and programs to meet the needs of its sponsoring organization and other special constituencies.

☐ Other Types of Evidence Appropriate for This Criterion

Although the above sections suggest the ways in which most institutions will proceed in attempting to document the accomplishment of their educational and other purposes, a few that have very specific purposes unique to them or to a limited number of similar institutions, may need to develop additional types of evidence.

Some examples:

◊ Institutions such as land grant universities have specific purposes related to education and research in applied fields, such as agriculture and home economics. Special attention to their influence on those fields might be appropriate.

◊ Some institutions have purposes related to a targeted population (e.g., underprepared students, members of a Native American tribe, working adults). They will want to include evidence related to their accomplishments with those specific populations.

◊ An institution that has as one of its purposes the inculcation of certain values will want to evaluate the evidence of its effectiveness in accomplishing that purpose.

◊ A college that states the purpose of assuring the employability of its students will want to provide evidence about how well it places its students and how well they perform on the job.

☐ Weighing Types of Evidence in Determining Whether This Criterion is Met

The Commission has determined that the results of an institution's program of assessment will provide important evidence of how well this criterion is met. But because specific institutions have different configurations in which certain educational and other purposes are more prominent than others, those institutions and teams evaluating them will need to pay particular attention to the ways in which they document their accomplishment.

Some examples:

- ◊ An institution is heavily engaged in providing extension education and in-house, customized training programs. It might show strong evidence that it fulfills the stated purposes of meeting broader public needs, even while assuring the strength and quality of its traditional academic programs.
- ◊ An institution invests in good support services (e.g., libraries and laboratories) but its educational programs do not utilize those services. It can expect the Commission to question the quality of its educational programs and its commitment to excellence in teaching and learning.
- ◊ An institutional assessment program relies almost solely on student satisfaction surveys. It will undoubtedly weaken that institution's claims that it appropriately documents student academic achievement.
- ◊ An institution has a significantly underprepared student population and is suffering high attrition but offers no support services such as advising, developmental instruction, and personalized tutoring. It will be challenged on its claims that its few graduates testify to achievement of its educational purposes.

FOCUS ON CRITERION FOUR

"The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness."

☐ Commission Meaning of "Can Continue to Accomplish Its Purposes"

If accreditation is to serve both educators and the public, it is necessary that the process result in an informed estimate of the institution's future viability and effectiveness. While accreditation cannot guarantee that an institution will always have the resources to continue to accomplish its purposes, it does represent the best judgment of peers available at the time of the evaluation about the institution's prospects for the future.

This criterion assumes that Criterion One and Criterion Three are met. That is, the institution's understanding of its central stated purposes is certain and its record to date shows that it accomplishes those purposes. Criterion Four is not about basic institutional survival; it is about continued institutional achievement of agreed-upon purposes.

☐ Commission Meaning of "Strengthening Educational Effectiveness"

In choosing to affiliate with the Commission, an institution not only seeks external validation of its accomplishments; it also accepts the responsibility to find ways to improve the educational programs it offers. To meet this criterion, it will need to have the resources necessary to maintain strengths, correct weaknesses, and respond to the opportunities and threats of a changing society's instructional needs.

- ◇ **Planning for educational improvement.** Much can be learned about an institution's commitment to improving its educational programs by studying its planning and budgeting documents. Planning documents reflect the institution's awareness of where it needs to change in order to improve.

- ◇ **Building on assessment.** In 1989 the Commission approved its current assessment initiative. Institutions anxious to learn whether they are actually accomplishing what they claim to be doing inevitably discover ways in which they could improve what they are doing.

- ◇ **Growing from the self-study process.** Since the process of preparing a Self-Study Report is an exercise in self-evaluation, the results should contribute directly to institutional improvement. The thoroughness and honesty with which the institution conducts its self-study says much about its commitment to acknowledge those areas in which it could become more effective. The findings of the self-study process should be directly incorporated into the institution's plans to correct its weaknesses and enhance its strengths. Those in turn could be expressed through the allocation of resources provided for in the institution's operating budgets.

☐ The Role of Institutional Planning in This Criterion

Sometimes this criterion is referred to as the "planning criterion" because planning is considered by the Commission to be an important indicator of a pattern of evidence for Criterion Four. The Commission is aware that in the past some institutions with relatively little formal planning have continued to accomplish their purposes through abundant resources and dynamic leadership. The Commission is also cognizant of institutions with sound planning practices that have been unable to continue to fulfill their mission or to remain financially viable. Increasingly, however, the institution with a structured, ongoing planning process is better prepared to improve on its strengths and weaknesses and to meet the opportunities and threats to its future.

An effective planning process offers the means to modify goals, to alter or develop programs and methods of instruction, to cope with shifting levels and sources of support, and continually to strengthen institutional vitality. An effective planning process

- ◇ is ongoing, involving representatives of all constituencies;

- ◇ takes into account present and projected internal and external circumstances that can affect the institution;

- ◇ results in a written, annually-updated document that has widespread usefulness throughout the institution;

- ◇ enumerates, at the end of the year, the accomplishments and obstacles or other changes accommodated through modification of the previous year's plan.

In Criterion Four, the Commission, while emphasizing the importance of planning, presents it as one of several important factors that contributes most directly to assuring continuous improvement. Judgments about the probability of an institution's future vitality include consideration of the success of its past, its present strength, and its planning for its future.

☐ The Role of "Strengthen Educational Effectiveness" in the Accreditation Process

In a time of significant change, forecasting the future can be an uncertain business. Demographic shifts and financial upheavals can occur with unanticipated speed. New technologies shape the workplace; they also shape the very nature of the educational process. The accrediting decision must weigh an institution's

understanding of the changing environment in which it exists. Because reasonable people can disagree on what is the best strategy for the future, Evaluation Teams will seldom rest an accrediting decision solely on future plans alone. In situations where the inability to plan reflects larger institutional troubles, this criterion might begin to bear considerable weight among the others.

Some examples:

- An institution, significantly in debt, apparently unable for several years to reverse downward trends in enrollment is presenting unrealistic plans for addressing these problems. It might lead a team to doubt its capacity to continue into the future.
- An institution has achieved fiscal stability at the expense of the quality of its educational programs and with no good sense of how to enhance its education without incurring unwanted debt. It may cause a team to question whether this criterion is met.

☐ Institutional Self-Study and Team Evaluation for This Criterion

Some academic leaders believe that a clue to future performance is how well an institution has responded to past challenges. Others, however, believe that in this period of dramatic and constant change, unknown to previous generations, past performance may be unrelated to how well an institution will respond to present opportunities and threats. Regardless of which view has currency, some useful indicators of present and future stability and resilience include:

- stability of the institutional leadership—board, president, administration, and faculty—and its implication for the future;
- stability of human, financial, and physical resources and how they position the institution to meet opportunities and threats;
- governance structures and processes that enable the institution's leadership to respond quickly and appropriately to changing external and internal circumstances;
- institutional assessment and planning efforts and their apparent effectiveness on academic planning and student academic achievement.

Self-study reports should identify the plans and structures through which institutional strengths will be maintained and concerns addressed. The self-study should both identify and weigh existing short- and long-range plans—including strategic, tactical, and operational planning—and the institution's past record of planning. Too many institutions' planning processes focus solely on finances and facilities. Important as those are, the relationship between them and improvement in the educational program should be clear.

The Commission is committed strongly to the tenet that all institutions can improve the education they provide. It expects the self-study process and report both to identify those critical areas in need of improvement and to indicate the ways in which an institution intends to make those improvements.

☐ Pattern of Evidence Supporting This Criterion

As the previous discussion suggests, the institution's planning process and its academic planning process are important components of the institutional Self-Study Report. Planning alone, however, is not adequate. **In developing the pattern of evidence supporting this criterion, the Commission suggests the breadth of review that it considers appropriate.**

a. a current resource base—financial, physical, and human—that positions the institution for the future.

b. decision-making processes with tested capability of responding effectively to anticipated and unanticipated challenges to the institution.

c. structured assessment processes that are continuous, that involve a variety of institutional constituencies, and that provide meaningful and useful information to the planning processes as well as to students, faculty, and administration.

d. plans as well as ongoing, effective planning processes necessary to the institution's continuance.

e. resources organized and allocated to support its plans for strengthening both the institution and its programs.

☐ Other Types of Evidence Appropriate for This Criterion

As with each of the other criteria, there will be some institutions whose specialized purpose or unique circumstances require them to present additional types of evidence to support their claim that they fulfill Criterion Four.

Some examples:

◊ A public institution has experienced significant decline in enrollment but has been recently mandated by the state to serve as the primary deliverer of a few specific programs throughout the state. It will want to weigh the potential impact of this mandate and, if appropriate, use it as evidence of new possibilities for future growth and educational quality.

◊ A church-related institution has enjoyed strong, continuous support from congregations. It will need to evaluate whether it can rely on this support in future projection of its funding. If there are documents to this effect, they could be provided as evidence of continued financial viability.

◊ An institution has been financially stable for many years, although almost totally tuition driven. It will want to assess whether it can rely on adequate numbers of students and levels of tuition to continue to fund its operations in the coming decade. The results could be offered as evidence of continuing viability.

◊ A single purpose institution offers only programs that require professional accreditation for licensure. It should evaluate likely changes both in the profession itself and in the specialized accrediting body that might affect the content and structure of its programs. The institution's ability to prepare for the impact of these external forces might suggest much about its future success.

☐ Weighing Types of Evidence in Determining Whether This Criterion Is Met

Different institutions will face different opportunities and challenges to their continuing ability to accomplish their purposes and to strengthen their educational effectiveness. The institution may wish to provide additional evidence of its ability to utilize opportunities that circumstances present.

Some examples:

◊ An institution has a very short record of fiscal stability but an excellent reputation for providing quality education to a growing minority community. It will want to document the enthusiasm of its supporters, but its ability to forecast reasonably a longer record of fiscal stability might be critical to its future.

◊ An institution has survived many years with limited financial resources. It will want to provide careful projections of future funding and strategies it intends to utilize to strengthen its educational effective-

ness within financial constraints. It will want to emphasize the lessons it has learned from its past, drawing attention to what it might see as a proven record of living adequately on limited resources.

- An institution is improving its reputation for educational excellence through a well-planned campaign of publicly disclosing the results of its student assessment program. It may want to use that evidence, if it can be documented, to support its claims that its rather poor prior record of effective institutional planning should be placed in the changing context.
- An institution has strong board leadership in planning and a solid record of seeing plans through to completion. This will outweigh the short-term dislocation caused by recent unanticipated administrative turnover.

FOCUS ON CRITERION FIVE

"The institution demonstrates integrity in its practices and relationships."

☐ Commission Meaning of "Integrity"

The higher education community has often assumed that because of its traditional commitment to the pursuit of truth, its institutional behavior is beyond reproach and that the public should trust in this. But institutions of higher education are as vulnerable to error as are all other social institutions. During the past decade, some widely-reported lapses in institutional integrity have brought into new focus the relationship between institutional integrity and institutional accreditation.

By integrity, the Commission means that an institution adheres both to the civil laws and to the code of ethics commonly accepted by the academic community. Such values are reflected by an institution's

- expression of the ethical values it has adopted through institutional policies and procedures made public in its public documents and contractual arrangements;
- assurance that its practices are consistent with its publicly stated policies;
- expectation that members of its constituencies (administration, faculty, and students) observe the tenets of academic honesty;
- practice of full disclosure in its dealings with the members of the institution and its publics;
- operation without conflict of interest at the board, administrative, and faculty levels;
- living up to the commitments it makes in all its public representations.

The Commission recognizes that an institution's history, tradition, and mission may shape its particular policies and practices. Consequently, the Commission does not prescribe any single set of principles to be followed by all institutions. It does expect all member institutions to have a body of ethical values to which it subscribes and which inform institutional policies and procedures and guide their institutional practices and relationships.

☐ Commission Meaning of "Practices and Relationships"

The words "practices and relationships" in this criterion implicitly make a distinction between policies and procedures—what the institution states in writing—and actions—how the institution actually carries out its activities as an educational and business organization.

Part of the accrediting process usually entails an audit of the institution's policies and procedures, making sure that the institution has addressed, in publicly available documents, such matters as academic honesty, nondiscrimination, affirmative action, harassment, professional ethics and conduct, and fair grievance processes.

All institutions of higher education affiliated with the Commission, even those closely held by a religious organization or a private owner, have public roles and responsibilities. Federal and state laws define many of those roles and responsibilities. In addition, there is a strong and enduring culture common to almost all institutions of higher education that not only transmits its values and acceptable behaviors, but also determines additional roles and responsibilities for accredited institutions. With this criterion, the Commission goes beyond institutional behavior that is purely legal to include institutional behavior that reflects ethical values that institutions of higher education have traditionally expected of themselves and of each other.

The Role of Diversity and Equity in This Criterion

Institutions of higher education support faculty members' study of the impact on U.S. society of the growing diversity of its population—diversity measured through ethnicity, race, religion, age, sex, and sexual orientation. Institutions also face the challenge of responding directly to this diversity whether it is reflected in their student bodies and faculty or in the ethnic and cultural diversity found off the campus.

Because in the late 1980s and early 1990s "multiculturalism" and "cultural diversity" became code words in a national struggle over matters ranging from hiring preferences to the content of general education programs, in 1991 the Commission adopted a statement that explained its expectations of affiliated institutions.

Commission Statement on Access, Equity, and Diversity

The Commission recognizes that much of the vitality in the American system of higher education comes from its broad spectrum of differing institutions, missions, and constituencies. Such diversity enriches the quality of American higher education and helps to prepare graduates to live and work in a culturally pluralistic, interdependent world.

Individual and group differences in ideas, viewpoints, perspectives, backgrounds, and values add richness to the teaching and learning process which can strengthen an institution. So, too, shared values, experiences, and purposes bring unity and a sense of community of common purpose to an institution. The Commission urges each institution to examine its own character, to find its proper balance between the benefits of diversity and the values of community, and to communicate these views to the public. However, regardless of specific institutional practices, the Commission expects an institution to create and maintain a teaching and learning environment that supports sensitivity to diverse individuals and groups. Further, the Commission expects an affiliated institution to discourage acts of racism, sexism, bigotry, harassment, and violence while it teaches students and faculty alike to see in proper perspective the differences that separate and the commonalties that bind all peoples and cultures.

To create and maintain this environment, institutions should identify and correct any existing policies and practices that allow inequitable treatment of current and potential faculty, students, staff, and any other groups they serve. The Commission recognizes that an institution's history, tradition, and mission may shape its particular policies and practices; consequently, the Commission does not prescribe any single set of principles to be followed by all institutions. It does expect its members to be concerned with the integrity and equitable application of their institutional policies, and to publicize and explain thoughtfully those policies and practices to their constituencies and to the public.

Adopted by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education - August 9, 1991

☐ The Role of Institutional Integrity in the Accreditation Process

With this new criterion, the Commission makes clear its intention to incorporate into its accrediting processes consideration of all matters that speak to the integrity with which an institution of higher education conducts its business. Over the past decade, the Commission has been particularly concerned about the questionable practices by which institutions seek, recruit, and admit students both in the United States and abroad; by advertising and recruiting materials that falsely present the institution's facilities and programs and/or propose quick and easy degrees; and by the abuse of multiple student financial aid programs.

Questionable practices relating to the management of student enrollments, however, are just a sampling of the high visibility issues that confront the Commission when considering the integrity of an institution. The major changes taking place in higher education require new applications of traditional, ethical values. Some are creative forms of financing the educational enterprise, consortia and cooperative initiatives for mounting and delivering educational programs, and growth of "non-traditional" faculty and students within the educational community.

In light of these changes, institutions and the Commission must consider and evaluate how institutional integrity relates to mission and purposes, to resources, to institutional effectiveness, and to institutional planning.

☐ Statements of Good Practice Promulgated by Other Organizations

From time to time, the Commission issues a formal statement through which it establishes a specific interpretation of certain matters concerning institutional integrity. The "Statement on Access, Equity, and Diversity" printed above is one example. But the Commission also looks to a variety of other professional and educational organizations for assistance in defining principles of good practices and ethical behavior on specific matters. It does not anticipate developing its own statement on every significant matter involving institutional integrity.

The Commission **does not officially endorse** the statements provided by those organizations, **but it recommends** that affiliated institutions give them careful attention.

In Chapter Reference A, the Commission provides a list of these statements. The list is not meant to be exhaustive but, instead, to suggest the broad range of resources available to institutions in evaluating their own practices and relationships as they relate to institutional integrity.

☐ Institutional Self-Study and Team Evaluation for This Criterion

One excellent starting point for any institutional self-study and subsequent team evaluation in considering the institution's integrity in its practices and relationships would be the review and evaluation of the policies and procedures found in the institution's public documents. However, the mere existence of these policies and procedures in public documents is not sufficient. Their content and their implementation should be measured by whether

- ◇ stated policies and procedures are based on ethical values,
- ◇ institutional practices are in keeping with the policies and procedures regarding institutional integrity,
- ◇ full and candid disclosure is encouraged and practiced throughout the institution,
- ◇ practice shows that the institution lives up to commitments it makes to its students and to the public at large.

- **Ethical policies and procedures.** Criterion Five addresses the institution's expectations of the ethical behavior of individuals within each of its constituencies (board members, administrators, staff members, faculty, and students). It also speaks to the basic underlying attitude the institution takes toward those constituencies, other institutions, and the public at large. A self-study process that includes critical examination of institutional policies and procedures will go far in identifying commitment to those expectations and that attitude.

- **Full disclosure.** A self-study process should identify the whole variety of situations that place on the institution the obligation for full disclosure. Full disclosure means that an institution responds as fully as law and professional ethics allow and as honestly as possible in its relationships with its constituencies and its publics. It is obvious that certain matters must be confidential and are so protected by law. But institutional integrity should require that appropriate and accurate information be given to those who need or request it.

  Some examples:

  - The catalog is the primary document through which current and prospective students learn about the institution. Too often it contains a misleading listing of courses, including many that are seldom taught and some that have not been taught for years.

  - Institutions that own and operate subcorporations, especially those that provide services to students such as bookstores or other campus businesses directed to students, should clearly identify the relationship. If the institution contracts such services, the students should be aware of those contractual ties.

  - Fundraising arms of public institutions, particularly those that are separately incorporated and not directly answerable to the governing board of the institution, should be openly and clearly defined.

  As institutions turn to complex relationships with supporting and subsidiary groups, whether wholly-owned by the institution or related through tradition, it is important that those affected and those interested be able to understand those relationships. Full disclosure should require that they be completely, accurately, and clearly set forth in publicly available documents. Those engaged in the self-study process or team evaluation will probably look first for such documents and analyze them carefully.

- **Relationships with internal constituencies.** An institution has internal constituencies and external publics. It is important that the institution practices honesty and candor in its relationships with all of them. In dealing with internal constituencies, corporate by-laws, handbooks, manuals, and contracts usually set forth the basic relationship among these groups. The Commission does not prescribe organizational patterns or conditions for compensation and employment at an institution. However, it is appropriately concerned about the impact of such arrangements on the institution's ability to meet the Commission's criteria. Therefore, the institution in its self-study process and subsequently the Evaluation Team may want to review institutional publications and documents such as minutes of meetings of faculty or students where an officer has reported on important matters regarding the state of the institution, on issues facing the institution, or on specific matters affecting the constituency addressed; copies of the president's and other officers' public addresses; student newspaper articles; memos from faculty committees or officers to the entire institution.

- **Relationships with external publics.** Two places a self-study group or Evaluation Team may wish to begin to look for evidence of accurate self-representation in relations between the institution and its external publics are the public relations office and alumni publications. In fact, in an era marked by "marketing" of everything from educational programs to the value of the impact it has on the economy, an educational institution should evaluate with care how well it monitors the multiple marketing efforts that it mounts or that groups within it undertake.

One significant trend in the past decade has been forming new international links. From new recruiting programs for foreign students to establishing branch campuses abroad, institutions have begun to communicate with people who have difficulty understanding the unique aspects of U.S. higher education and voluntary accreditation. An institution will want to evaluate the ways it presents itself to an international community.

Today more and more institutions must seek funding from federal and state programs and organizations and from public and private foundations and philanthropists. They must also structure new relationships with sister institutions, business and industry, and other groups that either use the institution's services or help supply them. In all these situations the need for honest and candid information about the institution increases. Too many recent scandals in higher education have resulted not from misapplication of resources or misrepresentation of the institution, but from ill-advised efforts to respond to unanticipated external inquiries with obfuscation and concealment.

A self-study process should include critical examination of documents released to the public and contractual agreements between the institution and other organizations to be sure that they are honest and candid and reflect ethical values.

- **Consistency between policies and practice.** Even the most excellently crafted policies count for little if they fail to direct the actions of those who apply them. For example, over the past two decades, it has become routine for institutions to state publicly that discrimination is not practiced. In fact, institutional eligibility for many federal financial aid programs rests on an institution's professed commitment to non-discrimination. In many institutions affirmative action offices have been established to oversee the various institutional activities in which discrimination might occur. But, as with American society as a whole, discrimination is often hidden and subtle, and very few institutions have been able to eradicate it completely. An institution may wish to provide not only statements of policy but also records of activities and accomplishments that demonstrate its commitment to the elimination of discrimination in all its forms.

- **Living up to commitments.** Through its bylaws, catalogs, brochures, handbooks, policies and procedures, manuals, letters of appointment, and formal negotiated contracts, including those written through collective bargaining arrangements, an institution raises expectations and makes commitments to various of its members, constituencies, and its external publics. An institution also makes additional cultural and instructional commitments to its publics when it distributes information about programs designed to meet public needs or provide services to the wider community of which it is a part. At a time when institutions compete aggressively and openly for students and faculty and depend heavily upon public good will for funding, it is critically important that pledges made to both internal constituencies and external publics be accurate representations of the institution's intentions and that the institution has the capability to fulfill them.

☐ Pattern of Evidence Supporting This Criterion

As the previous discussion suggests, the institutional self-study process, the Self-Study Report, and the Team Report need to explore a variety of issues. **In developing the pattern of evidence supporting this criterion, the Commission suggests the breadth of review that it considers appropriate to this criterion.**

a. student, faculty, and staff handbooks that describe various institutional relationships with those constituencies, including appropriate grievance procedures.

b. policies and practices for the resolution of internal disputes within the institution's constituency.

c. policies and practices consistent with its mission related to equity of treatment, nondiscrimination, affirmative action, and other means of enhancing access to education and the building of a diverse educational community.

d. institutional publications, statements, and advertising that describe accurately and fairly the institution, its operations, and its programs.

e. relationships with other institutions of higher education conducted ethically and responsibly.

f. appropriate support for resources shared with other institutions.

g. policies and procedures regarding institutional relationships with and responsibility for intercollegiate athletics, student associations, and subsidiary or related business enterprises.

h. oversight processes for monitoring contractual arrangements with government, industry, and other organizations.

☐ Other Types of Evidence Appropriate for This Criterion

All institutions of higher education need to examine many of the same areas of practices and relationships when assessing their institutional integrity. Most of those are captured both in the language of this criterion and in the General Institutional Requirements. But some institutions will also confront situations unique to their state, their specific type of institution, or a particular program they offer. In those situations, additional types of evidence might be important to an institution's claim that it fulfills this criterion. Although the Commission looks to the appropriate national and regional athletic associations and conferences for the detailed supervision of intercollegiate programs, it expects institutions to evaluate their programs as part of the self-study process and to include that evaluation in the Self-Study Report.

Some examples:

◊ An institution is charged by state law to ensure that its board meetings are announced and open to the public. It will want to include in its discussion an evaluation of how it fulfills this law.

◊ An institution must report to a denominational governing body. It might choose to evaluate how it honors the terms of any agreement of denominational affiliation.

◊ An institution has a specific commitment to assist in local community development. It might choose to evaluate the effectiveness of past, current, and planned relationships with civic and business groups in contributing to the economic, educational, and cultural advancement of the community.

◊ An institution specifically serves the needs of state and federal agencies (e.g., prison authorities, mental health authorities, military). It will want to include an evaluation of their faculty's and students' accomplishments in meeting these special contractual obligations, both to the agencies, and to those served within them.

◊ A public or private institution has established a strong alumni or local foundation to gather and hold funds on behalf of the institution. It will need to evaluate carefully both its formal relationship with that foundation and its financial records and practices.

◊ An institution is known for its decentralization and educational entrepreneurialism. It will want to pay special attention to the accuracy of publications, statements, and advertising issued by the various units operating under the institution's name.

☐ Weighing Types of Evidence in Determining Whether This Criterion Is Met

Where written policies and procedures communicate an acceptance of ethical values not documented by an institution's actual practices and relationships, the Evaluation Team may feel obliged to weigh evidence of actual practices and relationships more heavily than published policies and procedures. If an institution's actual practices are exemplary but its written policies and procedures are inadequate or out-of-date, the team may choose to weigh the practice over the policy. There are other situations in which types of evidence might be weighed differently.

Some examples:

- A large public institution has spent a number of years developing faculty and student handbooks that include exemplary systems of governance, administration, faculty self-regulation, and communications. However, the newly-elected governing board, responding to political pressures, has begun to intervene in curricular matters. The integrity of the institution might rest more with the ability of the board to understand and act on its appropriate roles than with the exemplary documents.

- A religious institution explicitly limits its faculty and/or student body to those who hold specific religious doctrines. The student newspaper has been closed down ostensibly because of lack of funding, but some claim it took editorial stands that violated religious doctrine. An evaluation of institutional policies and procedures and their application, as well as the adequacy of the communication regarding doctrinal orthodoxy, may figure prominently in the determination that this criterion is met.

- A private institution presents itself in all its advertising and recruiting brochures as a strong liberal arts college when in fact more than 75% of the students are enrolled in its three professional programs. Retention and student completion of degrees are both remarkably high and have been for years. A careful evaluation might indicate that the apparent lack of fit between what the institution is and how it portrays itself should be remedied, but that there is little compelling evidence that the institution's integrity is in jeopardy.

- An institution is in the middle of an alleged scandal concerning several secret contracts between the institution and for-profit organizations owned by some members of the faculty and administration. The fact that the institution has and can document the use of carefully structured review processes by which all contracts—including these secret contracts—are reviewed might outweigh the issues of full disclosure in this situation.

Chapter Reference A

Principles of Good Practice: A Resource Guide

The following is a list of publications available from national organizations that can be useful as resources in assisting institutions in formulating policies and procedures that are in keeping with generally accepted practice in institutions of higher education.

NOTE. The importance of ethical practice has long been recognized by those professionally involved in higher education. That an institution demonstrates integrity in its practices and relationships is an expectation that NCA holds for its affiliated institutions. However, **none of the publications listed below should be construed as representing official NCA policy.**

ADMISSIONS AND RECRUITMENT

Joint Statement of Principles of Good Practice in College Admission and Recruitment. The 1991 Revised version of the Statement has been endorsed by the American Council on Education (ACE), the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers (AACRAO), the College Board, the National Association of College Admission Counselors (NACAC) and the National Association of the Secondary Schools Principals (NASSP). The Statement is intended to provide guidelines for developing voluntary standards in such areas as promotion and recruitment, admissions procedures, standardized college admission testing, financial aid, and the awarding of credit for advanced standing students. (American Council on Education, One Dupont Circle, Washington, DC 20036-1193; (202) 939-9450.)

ASSESSMENT

Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning. This 1992 document is authored by Alexander W. Astin, Trudy W. Banta, K. Patricia Cross, Elaine El-Khawas, Peter T. Ewell, Pat Hutchings, Theodore J. Marchese, Kay M. McClenney, Marcia Mentkowski, Margaret A. Miller, E. Thomas Moran, and Barbara D. Wright and was developed under the auspices of the AAHE Assessment Forum. Its nine principles of "practical wisdom" is intended as "helpful for examining current practice and for developing" and for linking assessment and improved student learning. (American Association for Higher Education, One Dupont Circle, Suite 360, Washington, DC 20036-1110; (202) 293-6440; FAX: (202) 293-0073.)

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

☐ Associate Degree Programs

Criteria for Excellence in Associate in Applied Science Degree Programs. This 1985 policy statement of the National Council for Occupational Education (NCOE) covers areas such as degree designation, general education and related studies, admission requirements, and experience based credit and provides a sample Curriculum Guide. (Dr. Russell Paulsen, NCOE Executive Director, 1000 Campus Drive, Wausau, WI 54501. $3.00 each.)

☐ Graduate Education

Each of the following titles contain policy statements, guidelines, and a glossary of terms:

- Academic Review of Graduate Programs
- International Graduate Students: A Guide for Graduate Deans, Faculty and Administrators
- Off-Campus Graduate Education.
- Organization and Administration of Graduate Education
- The Doctor of Philosophy Degree
- The Master's Degree

(Council of Graduate Schools (CGS), One Dupont Circle, Washington, DC 20036-1173; (202) 223-3791; FAX (202) 331-7157.)

☐ Military Education

Principles of Good Practice for Voluntary Education Programs on Military Installations and *Principles of Good Practice for Institutions Supporting Voluntary Education Programs on Military Installations.* The governing board of the Military Installation Voluntary Education Review (MIVER) approved the Principles in 1994. These are companion documents for colleges and universities serving on military bases. Both define quality guidelines for program implementation for those who serve as major partners in the Department of Defense's Voluntary Education Program. (MIVER, One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 250, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 775-8578.)

☐ Undergraduate Education

Integrity in the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community. Printed in 1985, the report contains recommendations regarding faculty responsibility, a minimum required curriculum, accountability, and the development of the teaching profession at the college level. Available from: Association of American Colleges, One Dupont Circle, Washington, DC.

Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education. Chickering, A.W., Gamson, Z. F., & Barsi, L. M. (1987). The "Faculty Inventory" and the "Institutional Inventory" are a joint effort of the American Association for Higher Education, the Education Commission of the States, and The Johnson Foundation, Inc. Quantities are limited to 300 for each inventory per institution. (The Johnson Foundation, Inc., Racine, WI 53401-0547.)

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles, and Procedures. Urban Whitaker (1989) provides principles and procedures for assessing sponsored learning and prior experiential learning. (Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), 223 West Jackson, Suite 510, Chicago, IL 60606; (312) 922-5909.)

EXTERNAL DEGREE PROGRAMS

Principles of Good Practice for Alternative and External Degree Programs for Adults. Sponsored by The Center for Adult Learning and Educational Credentials, American Council on Education & The Alliance: An Association for Alternative Degree Programs for Adults (1990), the Principles provide guidelines on the following: mission

statement; personnel, faculty, academic professionals; learning outcomes, learning experiences, assessment, student services, program administration, and program evaluation. (American Council on Education (ACE), One Dupont Circle, Washington, DC 20036-1193; (202) 939-9450.)

INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE

Joint Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities. Jointly formulated by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB). Directed primarily at trustees, administrators, and faculty, the Statement contains an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the Governing Board, the President, and the Faculty. (American Association of University Professors (AAUP), 1012 Fourteenth Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20005.)

☐ Governing Boards

A series of publications on trusteeship and institutional governance designed for new and experienced trustees:

No. 1. Trustee Responsibilities
No. 2. A Guide for New Trustees
No. 3. Trustee Orientation and Development Programs
No. 4. The Board Chair-President Relationship
No. 5. Distinguishing Between Policy and Administration
No. 6. The Fund-Raising Role
No. 7 Resource Management Responsibilities
No. 8 Endowment Management
No. 9 The Board's Role in Planning
No. 10 Trustees and Preventive Law
No. 11 The Board's Role in Accreditation
No. 12 The Tenure Issue
No. 13 The Role of the Board Secretary
No. 14 Making Advisory Committees and Boards Work

Available individually or as a set. (Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB), One Dupont Circle Suite # 400, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 296-8400.)

☐ President

Presidents Make a Difference: Strengthening Leadership in Colleges and Universities A Report of the Commission on Strengthening Presidential Leadership. Sponsored by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. The Commission provides a series of recommendations for enhancing the presidency. (Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB), One Dupont Circle Suite # 400, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 296-8400.)

FACULTY

Policy Documents and Reports. The 1990 edition is a collection of policy documents and reports, containing standards for academic practice that can be utilized in the development of institutional handbooks: Academic Freedom, Tenure and Due Process; Professional Ethics; Discrimination (including affirmative action and sexual harassment); Collective Bargaining; Students Rights and Freedoms; College and University Accreditation; Research and Teaching; Collateral Benefits (retirement and insurance plans, leaves of absence, child-bearing, family emergencies and child care). (American Association of University Professors (AAUP), 1012 Fourteenth Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20005.)

FINANCES

College & University Business Administration (1992). 5th ed. 3 vol. Edited by D.M. Greene. Volume 1, "Business, Financial, and Administrative Functions," focuses on institutional organization and the roles of the Chief Business Officer. Volume 2, "Fiscal Functions," provides analyses of such functions as budgeting, costing and pricing, taxation, endowment management, cash management, debt financing, and risk management. Volume 3, "Institutional Functions," focuses on issues related to human resources management, facilities management, environmental health and safety, security, research and sponsored programs, student financial aid, and auxiliary enterprises. (National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), One Dupont Circle Suite #500, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 861-2500.)

LIBRARIES

Standards for College Libraries, 1986. The Standards consider non-print collections and services; formulas for collections, staff, and budget (% of E&G); and networking and cooperative associations, taking into account the implications of on-line access to national databases, reference tools, and bibliographic utilities.

ACRL Guidelines for Extended Campus Library Services, 1990. Approval by the American Library Association (ALA) Standards Committee, the Guidelines address a number of areas, including management, finances, personnel, facilities, resources, and services, as these pertain to the information needs of students and faculty at extended campus programs.

(American Library Association, Association of College and Research Libraries, 50 East Huron, Chicago, IL 60611; (312) 944-6780.)

PLANNING

Strategic and Operational

A Guide for New Planners. Norris, D. M., & Poulton, N. L. (1991). A handbook designed for new planners but equally helpful to the experienced. It includes a conceptual framework for planning and a bibliography. (The Society for College and University Planning (SCUP), 2026M School of Education Building, 610 E. University St., The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1259; (313) 763-4776.)

Chapter Reference B

Policy Guidelines for Refund of Student Charges

Introduction from the Commission

The Policy Guidelines for Refund of Student Charges below can assist institutions in formulating fair and equitable policies and procedures for the refund of charges assessed to students. The Guidelines were formulated in 1979, and have been endorsed by many organizations in higher education, including the American Council on Education and the National Association of College and University Business Officers. The original publication of the Guidelines was made by the Office on Self-Regulation Initiatives of ACE, and they are reprinted with the permission of ACE. Some institutions are now proposing new forms of student charges and refunds (including full or partial refund of tuition to graduates who are unable to obtain employment), and a review of good practice in charging and refunding is timely.

While the guidelines are clear, it is useful to set down underlying principles on which they rest:

a. Complete and clear disclosure of charges and refunds. The Guidelines point to variations that can occur in student charges and in refund procedures: non-refundable charges; partially-refundable charges; optional charges; damage deposits; etc. Disclosure of student charges and refunds requires not only specifying amounts, but also stating clearly and unambiguously the circumstances resulting in a charge and the requirements for a refund. Complaints received about student charges and refunds have shown that students sometimes do not know conditions affecting a refund or, in some cases, all the charges that will be assessed. Each institution should examine its published schedule of charges and refunds to see that it is clear and complete. It is also helpful if all information about charges and refunds can be found in a single place, or at least in a single document, easily available to all students—especially prospective students, whose decisions on attending the institution may be substantially affected by the charge and refund policies. Many institutions have found that the annual catalog, which contains other information of value to present and prospective students, is a natural location for information on student charges and refunds. The Commission's General Institutional Requirement 22 speaks to this matter of disclosure when it requires that a North Central institution "In its catalog or other official documents includes its mission statement along with accurate descriptions of ... its charges and its refund policies."

b. Authoritative institutional mechanisms for establishing and administering student charges and refunds. Assessing charges against students and providing refunds when appropriate are institutional actions reflecting transactions between an individual student and the institution. Since these decisions speak in the name of the institution they should be made by an established institutional procedure, preferably action by the governing board. In some cases exceptions to a refund policy can properly take into account unusual circumstances affecting an individual student, but such decisions should be clear exceptions to an established policy; the refund policy should not be a collection of ad hoc judgments made by individuals.

c. Refunds should reflect the costs to the institution of providing the services a student has received. Institutions often must obligate themselves for carrying out operations on the basis of initial enrollments. When a student leaves in the course of the term there may be a little saving in expense to the institution;

an overly generous refund to the leaving student can be an additional cost that must be borne by the students who stay. Because refund policies focus on individual students who leave an institution they have often provided refunds in excess of the saving in institutional expense. On the other hand, if a student's leaving does (or should) result in a lowered expense to the institution, that lowering of expense should be reflected in the refund for the leaving student. The Guidelines incorporate reasonable and fair principles reflecting the ways an educational institution incurs expenses in making its educational opportunities available to all students.

The Commission makes these Guidelines available to its affiliated institutions to encourage each to review its own student charge and refund policies.

POLICY GUIDELINES FOR REFUND OF STUDENT CHARGES

Guideline One. The governing board of the institution should review and approve the schedule of all institutional charges and refund policies applicable to students.

The pricing of services and refund policies have important consequences to students, parents, the institution, and society; as such, pricing and refund policies should receive board attention and approval.

Guideline Two. Institutions should seek consumer views in the process of establishing and amending charge and refund structures.

Decisions regarding institutional funds are ultimately the sole responsibility of the institution's legally designated fund custodians. However, consumer concerns do affect decision making, and involving consumers in decision making related to charges and refunds is a desirable approach for assessing student needs and creating public awareness of institutional requirements.

Guideline Three. Institutions should publish a current schedule of all student charges, a statement of the purpose for such charges, and related refund policies, and have them readily available free of charge to current and prospective students.

Students and parents have a right to know what charges they will be expected to pay and what will or will not be refunded. They also have a right to know what services accompany payment of the charges. Informational materials published free for students and prospective students are ideal for this purpose.

Guideline Four. Institutions should clearly designate all optional charges as "optional" in all published schedules and related materials. Clearly, charges that are mandatory and charges that are optional must be plainly differentiated in all printed materials.

Also, the institution should state clearly in its schedule if a charge is optional for some students but required for others. Statements accompanying the schedule may include institutional endorsements of the optional program or service.

Guideline Five. Institutions should clearly identify charges and deposits that are nonrefundable as "nonrefundable" on all published schedules.

Institutions determine on an individual basis which of their charges are refundable or nonrefundable. In general, admissions fees, application fees, laboratory fees, facility and student activity fees, and other similar charges are not refundable. Such fees are generally charged to cover the costs of activities such as processing applications and other student information, reserving academic positions, and establishing the limits of institutional programs and services, reserving housing space, and otherwise setting the fixed costs of the institution for the coming academic period.

Institutions determine on an individual basis which of their deposits are refundable or nonrefundable. Some deposits will be nonrefundable or will be credited to a student's account (e.g., tuition deposits). Others are refundable according to the terms of the deposit agreement (e.g., deposits for breakage).

Guideline Six. Institutions should refund housing rental charges, less a deposit, so long as written notification of cancellation is made prior to a well-publicized date that provides reasonable opportunity to make the space available to other students.

Written notification on or before the beginning of the term of the contract is necessary to ensure utilization of housing units. During the term of the contract, room charges are generally not refundable. However, based on the program offered, space availability, debt service requirements, state and local laws, and other individual circumstances, institutions may provide for some more flexible refund guideline for housing.

Guideline Seven. Institutions should refund board charges in full, less a deposit, if written notification of cancellation is made prior to a well-publicized date that falls on or before the beginning of the term of the contract. Subsequent board charges should be refunded on a pro rata basis less a withdrawal fee.

It is reasonable to make a refund for those goods and services not consumed. The withdrawal charge should reflect that portion of an institution's costs that are fixed for the term of the contract.

Guideline Eight. The institutional tuition refund policy for an academic period should include the following minimum guidelines:

1. The institution should refund 100 percent of the tuition charge, less a deposit fee, if written notification of cancellation is made prior to a well-publicized date that falls on or before the first day of classes.

2. The institution should refund at least 25 percent of the tuition charge if written notification is made during the first 25 percent of the academic period.

It is reasonable to refund tuition charges on a sliding scale if a student withdraws from his or her program prior to the end of the first 25 percent of the academic period, unless state law imposes a more restrictive refund policy.

Guideline Nine. The institution should assess no penalty charges where the institution, as opposed to the student, is in error. The institution should make refunds in cases where the institution has assessed charges in error.

Penalty charges, such as those involving late registration fees, change of scheduled fees, late payment fees, should not be assessed if it is determined that the student is not responsible for the action causing the charge to be levied.

Guideline Ten. Institutions should advise that any notification of withdrawal or cancellation and requests for refund must be in writing and addressed to the designated institutional officer.

A student's written notification of withdrawal or cancellation and request for a refund provides an accurate record of transactions and also ensures that such requests will be processed on a timely basis. Acceptance of oral requests is an undesirable practice.

Guideline Eleven. Institutions should pay or credit refunds due on a timely basis.

The definition of "timely basis" should include the time required to process a formal student request for refund, to process a check if required, and to allow for mail delivery, when necessary. If an institution has a policy that a refund of an inconsequential amount will not be made, such policy should be published as a part of all materials related to refund policies.

Guideline Twelve. Institutions should publicize, as a part of their dissemination of information on charges and refunds, that an appeals process exists for students or parents who feel that individual circumstances warrant exceptions from published policy. The informational materials should include the name, title, and address of the official responsible.

Although charges and refund policies should reflect extensive consideration of student and institutional needs, it will not be possible to encompass in these structures the variety of personal circumstances that may exist or develop. Institutions are required to provide a system of due process to their students, and charges and refund policies are legitimately a part of that process. Students and parents should be informed regularly of procedures for requesting information concerning exceptions to published policies.

5 Institutional Evaluation for Improvement

THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS IN ACCREDITATION

The Commission on Institutions of Higher Education builds its comprehensive evaluations for initial and continued candidacy and accreditation on two foundations: institutional self-study and peer evaluation. The institution plans and undertakes a self-study process to determine how well it meets the Commission's Requirements and Criteria and to clarify its plans for improving and enhancing its programs and operations. The institution summarizes its findings in a Self-Study Report that both constitutes its formal application for initial or continued candidacy or accreditation and forms the basis for an evaluation visit conducted by a team of peers from other accredited higher education institutions. This chapter provides information on the self-study process and the Self-Study Report for all institutions. Specific information for institutions in the Candidacy Program is available in Chapter 13.

☐ Purposes of Self-Study in Accreditation

Insisting, as it has since the 1930's, that institutional accreditation be based on an institution's capacity for and success in fulfilling its mission, a mission that is appropriate to a higher education institution, the Commission requires from the institution sufficient evidence on which to make an accrediting decision. More than three decades ago, the Commission determined that institutional self-study best provided the evidence.

Recognizing that careful self-evaluation is crucial to any institution's effectiveness, the Commission continues to require periodic self-study as a major component of the accreditation process. The Commission requires that an institution formally examine itself, assess its strengths and concerns, and plan how to capitalize on those strengths and eliminate or alleviate those concerns. In the process, an institution documents its present effectiveness and its strategies to continue to improve that effectiveness.

☐ What the Commission Expects in Every Self-Study

For an effective self-study, an institution develops a process that will yield information it can use to improve. While the Commission does not prescribe the details of an individual institution's self-study process, it has clear expectations for every self-study process for candidacy or accreditation. Every self-study process should:

- ◊ **Begin with a plan.** A beneficial self-study process must serve both internal and external purposes. Foresight and thoughtful structuring of the self-study process enable institutions to gain maximum benefits from the time and energy expended.

- ◊ **Focus on the whole institution.** The Commission does not accredit individual departments or programs; however, evaluating an institution in terms of the Commission's Criteria requires that each of the institution's component parts be examined. The information gathered through evaluation of each part is used to formulate an evaluation of the institution as a whole.

- ◊ **Permit wide involvement.** A Self-Study Report should speak for an entire institution, not for any single group within it. Therefore, it is important that the self-study process allow as wide an involvement as possible--from administrators, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and trustees. Commission Evaluation Teams generally expect there to be widespread awareness, across a campus, concerning the self-study process: that administrators, faculty, and staff--even students--will know how and by whom the self-study was conducted, and can testify that everyone had ample opportunity to contribute to the process and its results.

- ◇ **Build naturally on existing self-evaluation.** Every institution should already have ongoing programs for self-evaluation, for monitoring the effectiveness of its operations, and for planning. A self-study process should begin by incorporating and discussing what these existing evaluation programs have revealed. If the institution's existing approaches are inadequate, the self-study process should examine and improve them.

- ◇ **Evaluate rather than describe the institution.** To ensure an institution's continuing vitality and educational effectiveness, the self-study process must be analytical, self-critical. A descriptive Self-Study Report that merely inventories the institution's resources and operations fails to meet the Commission's expectations for its institutional evaluation process.

- ◇ **Identify clearly the institution's strengths and areas that need improvement.** Whether the self-study confirms the adequacy of ongoing evaluation and planning or whether it suggests new priorities and strategies, institutional improvement is a major goal of the process. A candid appraisal of strengths, concerns, opportunities, and challenges allows an institution to develop explicit plans to build upon its strengths, ameliorate its weaknesses, and address its challenges.

- ◇ **Produce a Self-Study Report.** The self-study process for candidacy or accreditation can serve a variety of internal and external purposes. However, the self-study process must yield a Self-Study Report that reflects the process that led to it and explicitly documents that the institution meets the Commission's General Institutional Requirements and Criteria for Accreditation and that it has instituted programs and mechanisms that will, over time, enhance its effectiveness.

□ Preparing for and Conducting the Self-Study

For most affiliated institutions, preparation for self-study and Commission evaluation begins approximately two years before the evaluation visit when the Executive Officer of the institution receives a reminder letter from the Commission. For an institution applying for initial affiliation (candidacy or accreditation), preparation begins when the Executive Director of the Commission advises the institution that the self-study process can commence. Critical components of an effective self-study process are:

- ■ **Providing sound, knowledgeable leadership.**

  - ◇ ***Presidential leadership and support.*** At its beginning, and throughout the self-study process, the Executive Officer's role of providing *visible* support is crucial. The more the Executive Officer makes it clear, both by word and action, that the self-study is an institutional priority, the greater the value and success of the process for the institution. To demonstrate the importance of the self-study to the institution, the Executive Officer should: (1) appoint a Self-Study Coordinator and the members of the Steering Committee and formally charge them with their task; (2) provide the Self-Study Coordinator with released time from teaching and/or other institutional duties; (3) give steering committee members the necessary support to carry out their charge, including clerical and secretarial assistance, computer(s), and space; and (4) make certain the Steering Committee and working committees have access to the people and information necessary for them to do their jobs and that those who are called upon for this information are asked to make this a top priority.

  - ◇ ***An effective Self-Study Coordinator.*** A Self-Study Coordinator is responsible for the overall direction and execution of the self-study and for the preparation of the Self-Study Report. The Self-Study Coordinator should command respect and confidence from across the institution and possess wide knowledge of institutional personnel, activities, and organizations. The Self-Study Coordinator ordinarily chairs the Self-Study Steering Committee and serves as a resource person to self-study work committees. Because writing and editing the Self-Study Report are usually major responsibilities, good human relations and communication skills are essential.

◊ ***A strong Self-Study Steering Committee.*** The primary task of the Steering Committee is to assist the Self-Study Coordinator to develop a self-study plan, coordinate its implementation, and prepare the Self-Study Report. People chosen for the steering committee should be recognized leaders who can command the respect of the institution's various constituencies. They should be knowledgeable about the institution and enthusiastic about the self-study process, appreciating its critical importance to the institution. Steering Committee members should be open-minded enough to examine difficult or controversial issues fairly; they should possess the resolve to follow through on all work undertaken.

Membership on the Steering Committee represents a serious commitment in time and energy. The institution's Executive Officer should make these appointments, in consultation with the Self-Study Coordinator, so that a broadly representative steering committee, including significant faculty involvement, can receive the cooperation necessary to carry out its task.

■ **Using the Commission's materials and services.**

◊ ***The Commission staff liaison.*** Commission staff liaisons review the institution's self-study plan and provide advice about ways to integrate the self-study process for Commission evaluation with an institution's ongoing evaluation and planning programs. They develop a proposed team for the evaluation visit, and review the final draft of the institution's Self-Study Report. If the institution indicates that it would find it useful, the staff liaison may visit the institution (at the Commission's expense) to help facilitate an effective self-study process.

◊ ***Commission documents.*** The Steering Committee will need to develop an understanding of the institution's affiliation with the Commission. Reviewing the last comprehensive Team Report and all subsequent Commission and/or staff actions is a good starting point for the Steering Committee. The institution, in its Self-Study Report, needs to address the major concerns identified by the last comprehensive evaluation team (and all subsequent focused visit teams). The current team will have received all of these documents and will want to see evidence of how the institution has changed as a result of its relationship with the Commission. An institution may also find it useful to review its last Self-Study Report, recognizing, however, that significant changes in Commission policies and procedures likely have made the substance and organization of older Self-Study Reports inappropriate models for the current process. The Executive Officer, Self-Study Coordinator, and Self-Study Steering Commission should have readily available the file of the institution's history with the Commission.

The reminder letter sent to the institution's Executive Officer provides information about the scope of the evaluation or special issues that the Commission requires be covered. The Steering Committee also should review the accuracy of the institution's current Record of Status and Scope, particularly the Statement of Affiliation Status (SAS) section. (Chapter 2 explains the meaning and Commission use of this document.) The institution should consult with its Commission staff liaison if it intends to request that its SAS be altered (e.g., to change the highest degree level or to modify a stipulation) or that the Commission permit it to effect a proposed change that requires prior approval (see the policies on institutional change in Chapter 12). The institution should seek clarification on how such requests for change may affect the self-study process and report.

◊ ***The Annual Meeting.*** The Commission newsletter, *Briefing;* one- and two-year reminder letters; and a special meeting announcement sent to all institutions encourage institutions to send representatives to the Commission's Annual Meeting held in Chicago in early spring. Many Annual Meeting sessions provide guidance about effective self-study strategies, review Commission policies and procedures, and provide an opportunity to examine sample Self-Study Reports and to exchange information and ideas with colleagues from other institutions engaged

in self-study. Annual Meeting attendance is voluntary, open to all persons interested in self-study and institutional improvement, and particularly useful for Self-Study Coordinators, Steering Committee members, executive officers, and trustees of institutions scheduled for evaluations in the next two or three years.

Important note: **The Self-Study Coordinator and Steering Committee should be appointed early enough to permit the Coordinator and one or more committee members to attend the Annual Meeting at least two academic years before the evaluation visit is scheduled to occur.**

◇ ***Commission publications.*** Read and distribute this *Handbook*. All those involved in the self-study process should be informed fully of the Commission's procedures and expectations. In particular, the Committee should study the General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for Accreditation. The Self-Study Coordinator should give serious consideration to subscribing to *Briefing* to assure access by the Coordinator and the Steering Committee to the most up-to-date information.

■ **Planning an effective self-study process.** The Steering Committee should plan a self-study process that both fits the needs of the institution and satisfies the requirements of the Commission. It is in designing a strategy for self-study that the institution can be most creative.

◇ ***Identify institutional goals for the process.*** If certain constituencies within the institution expect the process to accomplish certain ends, these expectations should be made explicit and incorporated into the Steering Committee's plans. If the institution has specific objectives it hopes to accomplish through the process, those objectives should figure prominently in the plan. Self-study is an opportunity for an institution to tackle the challenges that confront it, and to place upon the table issues that might otherwise go unaddressed. Usually this process begins with the Executive Officer and other administrators, but it can profitably include involvement from throughout the institution.

◇ ***Determine how the Criteria for Accreditation will be addressed in the self-study process and in the Self-Study Report.*** Because the Criteria cut across functional areas of an institution, one significant task is to plot clearly how an evaluation of the functions and operations of the institution will provide evidence that the Criteria for Accreditation are met. Typically, if not captured in the structure of the process, this is addressed through the proposed table of contents for the Self-Study Report.

◇ ***Develop a self-study calendar and timetable that takes into account the conduct as well as the purpose of the self-study process.*** It usually takes four or five full semesters for an institution to plan, execute, and report a comprehensive self-study process. When it receives the Commission's two-year reminder of a forthcoming comprehensive evaluation—if not before—the institution should begin to organize its self-study process. One of its first tasks is to establish a realistic timetable (see Chapter 10).

As soon as an institution completes its plan, it can submit it to its Commission staff liaison for comment and advice. Staff welcome plans from institutions as early as possible in order to provide the maximum assistance in the early stages of self-study.

■ **Conducting an effective self-study process.** In planning and conducting the self-study process, the Steering Committee should weigh carefully the time, energy, and commitment it will require, not only from itself but also from all the constituencies whose involvement will be crucial.

- ***Use appropriate committee structures.*** A self-study process need not be constructed from scratch, nor need it involve a new layer of committees. The Steering Committee should decide how best to integrate the structures for self-study with any committee structures already in place. It can divide aspects of each subject among its committees, or it can assign one committee to "take the lead" on a particular subject, allowing other groups to feed relevant analysis and evaluation to the designated committee. An institution needs to involve people familiar with the subjects of their scrutiny in its committees. It must also make clear which committees have responsibility for which assignments.

- ***Use existing evaluation and planning processes and materials before structuring new ones.*** Some institutions develop evaluation processes as a part of applications for or as conditions of external funding. Others engage in periodic evaluation for continued recognition by specialized accrediting agencies. Increasingly, institutions develop internal evaluation processes to inform decision-making. Rather than duplicate work that is already being done, the Steering Committee should inventory, update, and use in its self-study the information gained through these other evaluation and planning processes.

- ***Establish means for regular communication between the Self-Study Steering Committee and institutional constituencies*** throughout the self-study process, including dissemination of the Self-Study Report. While it is neither necessary nor desirable that everyone in the institution be on a committee, the Steering Committee needs to establish means of informing all the institution's constituencies of preliminary findings and developments throughout the self-study process. It should encourage their responses and use those responses to revise and refine the materials.

  Communication is not simply a matter of letting the total community know the progress of the process; it also includes establishing clearly and unambiguously the reporting mechanisms and writing responsibilities within the process that will lead from data-gathering to the completed Self-Study Report. Communication also involves letting constituencies know the evaluation methodologies the process will use for various aspects of the institution. This will go far toward ensuring that appropriate data are gathered and that those who are called upon for data understand how it will be analyzed.

- ***Conduct a self-study appropriate to the institution.*** The ways in which the self-study process is conducted will vary according to the size, complexity, and character of the institution. No single pattern is appropriate to all institutions.

  One task of the self-study is to gather information. Often, it is not as critical to create new data as it is to update, analyze, integrate, and draw meaning from information that already exists. Possible sources of self-study information include: ongoing institutional evaluation, planning, and budgeting processes; reports to system and/or state authorities; program outcomes data, particularly among occupational, vocational, and professional programs; self-study and accreditation reports concerning programs accredited by specialized accrediting agencies; local and regional data on population, employment, economic activity (available from city and county planning agencies, school districts, the census, public utilities, and business and professional organizations).

  In addition, institutions have found a variety of techniques valuable for gathering additional information and opinion, including mass surveys (of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members), interviews (conducted both by telephone and in person), focused group interviews, mail-in student newspaper "identify an issue" forums, and open meetings or hearings. In gathering opinion, the self-study should strive to allow all institutional constituencies to register their points of view.

THE SELF-STUDY REPORT

☐ The Purposes of the Self-Study Report

An institution's Self-Study Report plays specific roles in the Commission's processes.

- ◇ It constitutes the institution's formal request for initial or continued accreditation.
- ◇ It summarizes the purposes and findings of the self-study process.
- ◇ It demonstrates the institution's ability to analyze its effectiveness and develop plans for its own improvement.
- ◇ It provides evidence that the institution fulfills the Commission's General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for Accreditation.
- ◇ It succinctly summarizes the information necessary for the evaluation visit, the review process, and Commission action.

☐ The Audiences for the Self-Study Report

The self-study process requires an investment of money, time, and energy. To maximize the benefits of this investment, an institution should consider using the self-study as a vehicle for communicating to important internal and external audiences. Before it begins, an institution is wise to identify those who will benefit most from involvement and to envision specific prospective audiences for its Self-Study Report. Primary audiences for the report are the Commission representatives involved in the evaluation-accreditation process: the Commission staff liaison, the Evaluation Team, the Readers and/or Review Committee members, and the Commissioners. In addition, an institution should consider the impact and possible uses of the self-study process, interim reports, and final Self-Study Report on the following audiences: institutional personnel (administrators, faculty, staff); members of the institution's governing board; students, both current and prospective; parents of students; graduates; members of the community (or communities) the institution serves; members of institutional advisory committees; state regulatory agencies; national higher education organizations; and specialized accrediting agencies.

☐ The Structure of the Self-Study Report

The Self-Study Report should be:

- ◇ a well-written, readable narrative, not a collection of tables, charts, and graphs;
- ◇ concise yet thorough;
- ◇ evaluative rather than descriptive;
- ◇ written with the other materials its readers will have access to in mind. Since the Self-Study Report is part of a set of materials, which includes Basic Institutional Data Forms, faculty and student handbooks, and the catalog, it need not repeat information that its readers will find elsewhere.

There is no single way to organize the Self-Study Report. Each institution is encouraged to present its report in the manner best suited to its own purposes and needs, flowing from its self-study plan and process. However it is organized, the Self-Study Report should be preceded by a Table of Contents to assist readers. While there

are various ways to structure the Self-Study Report, its uses in the Commission's evaluation process require that every report contain three essential elements:

- ◇ an introduction that provides the context for the evaluation and addresses the concerns expressed by previous Commission teams;
- ◇ the body of the report that, regardless of how it is organized, includes an evaluation of the institution in terms of the Criteria for Accreditation;
- ◇ a final section in which the institution makes its request for the affiliation status sought, including any changes.

- **The introduction.** This first essential element of every Self-Study Report is clear, concise, and provides information to give the reader a context within which to read what follows. This introduction should include:
  - ◇ A brief profile of the institution, including special qualities and programs that are distinctive.
  - ◇ A summary of the institution's accreditation history.
  - ◇ The purposes of and audience(s) for the report. Each purpose should be specified. Although one purpose will undoubtedly be to gain or continue accreditation, there should be others as well. The intended audiences should be identified.
  - ◇ The organization of the report. A reader ought not have to wonder where to find the report's discussion of basic components of the institution.
  - ◇ Review of the self-study process. It is useful to readers of the Self-Study Report if an institution explains by which groups and processes various organizational components were reviewed.
  - ◇ The institution's response to the most recent NCA Team Report. The Evaluation Team receives copies of the most recent comprehensive Team Report and its formal Institutional Response, copies of subsequent focused reports and formal responses, and information on any other changes approved by the Commission. Therefore, the institution should comment on where and how the current Self-Study Report will treat concerns identified by previous Commission reviews.
  - ◇ Changes and/or significant developments since the most recent comprehensive evaluation.

- **The body of the Self-Study Report.** The body of the Self-Study Report may be organized in a variety of ways, but it must include an explicit evaluation of the institution in terms of the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation. Some institutions structure their Self-Study Reports around the Criteria. Others organize their reports around functional topics with a concluding chapter in which each criterion is explicitly mentioned together with a description of where and how the body of the report substantiates the claim that the criterion is fulfilled. Some institutions structure a self-study process around special emphases; their Self-Study Reports emphasize those topics but include a chapter or chapters that provide evidence that the Criteria are met.

  Self-study should not stop with description, but must go on to interpret the meaning of the things described. Both the self-study process and the Self-Study Report should stress analysis and evaluation. Information is, of course, essential both to stimulate serious introspection and to provide an accurate picture of the institution to the NCA Evaluation Team that will visit. It is critical, however, that the presentation of information be accompanied by the institution's interpretation of its significance.

An example:

The team's knowing a particular set of facts (e.g., the number/types of library holdings) is not particularly useful unless the team also knows:

- the institution's evaluation of these facts (e.g., whether and on what basis the institution believes its collection is exemplary, average, or inadequate);
- the reasons for and evidence behind this belief (e.g., evidence that students' use of the collection is or is not appropriate for their level and type of studies); and
- the actions the institution plans to take as a result of its analysis (e.g., encourage greater library use).

Many Self-Study Report writers find it difficult to determine how much descriptive content to provide. Naturally, the people at every institution believe theirs is unique, and that outsiders will not be able to understand or appreciate it without a full context. Often they discover they have written page after page of descriptive "background," and have neglected the self-appraisal or their thoughts about improvement.

Institutions should make every effort to limit description to the minimum a team of informed peers needs to understand the context of the self-analysis, concerns, and recommendations. A good Self-Study Report introduces an issue by outlining its background concisely, presents conclusion(s) the institution drew from its study of the issue, explains upon which evidence that conclusion rests, and discusses the implications of the evaluation for the institution's future.

One way to provide both description and evaluation is to structure the Self-Study Report so that it promotes analysis. The conclusion of the Self-Study Report (and of each chapter, if possible) consists, in part, of specific recommendations: for action, for change, for further study, or for collecting additional information. An institution also should include problems identified by the self-study process but attended to before the arrival of the Evaluation Team.

Identifying specific recommendations gives focus to the work of each committee during the self-study process. It forces everyone to discriminate between minor problems and major concerns. Ultimately, the Self-Study Report should identify institutional priorities among all of these recommendations.

Inviting self-study committees to identify concerns and suggest remedies needs to be built into the institution's decision-making structure. As part of the formal self-study process the Steering Committee or some other new or existing group needs to be charged by the Executive Officer, after the Evaluation Team leaves, to track the recommendations the self-study has produced; the recommendations need to be assigned formally to those individuals and groups in the institution whose job it is to deal with the areas concerned. This is not to suggest that any institution will necessarily adopt all recommendations its self-study process produces, merely that there must be a mechanism to guarantee that serious administrative and faculty consideration of each recommendation takes place. Explaining why a particular recommendation is unworkable will often satisfy those who devised it almost as much as adopting it would have. At the least, those who devised the recommendations will know their concern received attention. Without some provision to ensure that this follow-through occurs, Self-Study Steering Committee members are less likely to take their work seriously or will take their work seriously and become frustrated and angry when they see their suggestions shelved and ignored.

- **The summary.** In the concluding section of its Self-Study Report, an institution requests the status it seeks, justifying any changes it wants in its Statement of Affiliation Status or in its relationship with the Commission that require prior approval (see Chapter 12). The institution's rationale for each request should be a summary argument, supported by specific references to the discussion that appears in the body of the Self-Study Report. The summary need not repeat what has already been presented or

discussed elsewhere, but needs to pull together the institution's contention that it merits accreditation under the conditions it thinks appropriate.

If the report is organized around the five Criteria, with a chapter (or more) for each, there may be a summary at the end of each chapter (or group of chapters) arguing that the institution meets that particular criterion. However, if the report is organized in some other way (e.g., around institutional units or function, or around issues) it is essential that this final section presents a summary of evidence that the institution fulfills each of the five Criteria.

☐ The General Institutional Requirements in the Self-Study Report

In addition to the Criteria, the Self-Study Report needs to provide explicit assurance the Commission that the institution meets the General Institutional Requirements (GIRs). Since the GIRs are "threshold" requirements for both candidacy and accreditation and the Criteria establish a higher level of expectation, it may be convenient to refer to the discussion of the appropriate Criterion when treating a particular GIR. *It is important that the discussion of each Requirement include reference to substantiating documentation, whether that is provided within the Self-Study Report, the catalog and handbooks, or in the Evaluation Team's Resource Room on the campus.* This discussion of GIRs may be placed in an appendix or as a chapter in the body of the report; either is acceptable. Institutions seeking candidacy or initial accreditation, however, should devote one full chapter of the Self-Study Report to the GIRs, placing it after the introductory section of the report.

OTHER MATERIALS REQUIRED FOR THE EVALUATION

☐ Materials Sent to the Evaluation Team and the Commission Staff Liaison

An institution should send every member of the Evaluation Team the following items six to eight week prior to the date the evaluation visit begins. One set should also be sent to the Commission staff liaison.

- ◊ **Self-Study Report**
- ◊ **Basic Institutional Data Forms.** Each institution is required to complete a set of Basic Institutional Data Forms. These forms, which are sent to the institution by the Commission, ask for certain kinds of quantitative information to assist the Evaluation Team in its qualitative evaluation. The forms may be bound into the Self-Study Report as an appendix or may be submitted with the report as a separate document. Information should not differ significantly from that reported in the Self-Study Report. Where differences occur, a note of explanation on the form is needed.
- ◊ current copies of all **institutional catalogs** or course bulletins
- ◊ copies of the **faculty, staff, and student handbooks**

☐ Materials Available to the Evaluation Team on Campus

These materials should be readily available to the Evaluation Team during the visit (most, if not all, in a Resource Room established for the team).

- ◊ minutes of major institutional committees, including Self-Study Committee
- ◊ reports referenced in the Self-Study Report or used by working committees

- ◊ policies and procedures related to curriculum adoption, review, and evaluation
- ◊ policies on learning resources, including libraries, and formal agreements for the shared use of learning resources
- ◊ policies on interaction with other academic institutions and programs
- ◊ policies for allocation and use of computer resources
- ◊ budgets and expenditure reports for units, programs, and the institution as a whole, and the institutional audits at least for the last five years
- ◊ physical facilities master plan
- ◊ maintenance plans
- ◊ catalogs, bulletins, viewbooks, and other institutional promotional literature
- ◊ academic admission, good standing, and completion policies
- ◊ policies related to the employment, orientation, supervision, and evaluation of full-time faculty, part-time faculty, and teaching assistants
- ◊ faculty, student, and staff handbooks
- ◊ bylaws of faculty and staff assemblies or other representative bodies
- ◊ governance documents: charter, bylaws, policies, membership, minutes, reports
- ◊ a complete roster of faculty members (full- and part-time) and their teaching assignments during the current academic term
- ◊ formal agreements for all consortia or contractual relationships
- ◊ student service policies (residence, governance, health, financial aid, student records, and the refund policy)
- ◊ board rosters, charters, and bylaws, including those of separately incorporated entities (e.g., research, development, foundation, alumni associations, or athletic corporations)
- ◊ reports from other agencies or accrediting bodies

THE "SPECIAL EMPHASES" SELF-STUDY OPTION

☐ Purpose of the Special Emphases Option

A "special emphases" self-study is an option for accredited, established, well-functioning institutions that are willing to commit serious attention to a select group of critical issues in order to contribute to institutional improvement and educational excellence. Regular comprehensive evaluations have many benefits, and the choice of a special emphases self-study should be made only after careful consideration. A comprehensive evaluation is an excellent opportunity for an institution to submit for examination major issues without singling out specific programs, departments, or issues. A comprehensive evaluation often invites wider involvement from institutional constituencies. However, the accreditation process is revitalized for some institutions when they seize this opportunity to build their self-study processes around a small number of carefully selected critical areas in which they want to improve or excel.

Determining Whether an Institution Should Do a Special Emphases Self-Study

To exercise the special emphases option, an institution

- ◊ will have been accredited for several years, including at least one decennial cycle between comprehensive evaluations;
- ◊ demonstrates that it has adequately developed programs of evaluation and institutional research to provide the appropriate data to support the institution's claim that it meets the Criteria for Accreditation;
- ◊ submits documentation that confirms that there is a strong consensus among various institutional constituencies that the areas of emphasis are appropriate, timely, and are among the most critical issues confronting the institution;
- ◊ provides a self-study plan that shows that the work on the areas of emphasis will engage a significant portion of the institution's constituencies; and
- ◊ testifies to the institution's commitment to respond speedily and positively to the recommendations that result from studying the areas of emphasis and its willingness to be judged in part on its utilization of the results of its special emphases self-study.

Staff Approval of the Special Emphases Self-Study

A Steering Committee contemplating a self-study process built around a limited number of special emphases should contact its Commission staff liaison early in the planning process. The institution must submit a plan explaining the selected areas of emphasis, how it will study these in depth, and how it will demonstrate it continues to meet the GIRs and Criteria. The Commission staff must review and agree with the appropriateness of the special emphases option for the institution. The staff then develops a letter or memorandum that outlines the Commission's acceptance of the special emphases. Those documents accompany Evaluation Team invitations and all Commission materials used throughout the evaluation process.

Selecting the Areas of Focus

The special emphases self-study process may be an opportunity to reconsider and revise the institution's mission; to study enrollment trends; to initiate a more complex system of assessing student outcomes; to assess the impact of a new governance system; to work on a long-range plan; to evaluate and revise such a plan. Some additional possibilities might include assessment, community service, cultural diversity, general education, graduate education, undergraduate education, information technology, research, strategic planning, and student development. A special emphases self-study should lead to concrete change in the areas covered. By the very nature of this self-study process, proposals emerging from the self-study will need to have the full attention of the administration.

The Special Emphases Self-Study Report

Like reports of comprehensive Self-Studies, the special emphases Self-Study Report includes a table of contents, an introduction, a body, and a summary. In addition to what is normally included in regular Self-Study Reports, the Introduction provides the reasons for which the institution undertook a special emphases self-study. The first section of the body of the report provides solid evidence that the GIRs and Criteria are met. Much of this evidence can be provided by interpreting readily available institutional data. Following this, each special emphasis should then be treated, in appropriate depth, in its own section of the body of the report. Finally, the

summary should present the institution's argument that it deserves continued accreditation because it satisfies the Criteria and GIRs and because it used the special emphases self-study as an effective means to further institutional improvement.

☐ Special Emphases Evaluation Teams

When it visits the institution, the Evaluation Team will expect that major institutional groups (from the CEO on down) recognize the importance on the areas of emphasis and have a stake in the outcomes achieved by the self-study, and that the vast majority of those the Evaluation Team interviews will have been involved directly in the examination of the areas of emphasis or have a clear sense that they had the opportunity to offer input into the examination process. In addition, the team should anticipate that most critical issues facing the institution will be included in the areas of emphasis—that there will be no unexpected major problems that the self-study failed to confront. Since the institution has committed itself to action by undertaking a special emphases self-study, the team may recommend more monitoring (especially in the form of progress reports) than would be the case in a regular comprehensive evaluation.

Commission staff nominates the members of the Evaluation Team according to the special emphases identified in the written proposal. An Evaluation Team for a special emphases visit may be slightly larger than a team for a regular comprehensive evaluation visit.

6 Peer Review as a Form of Evaluation and Self-Regulation

PEER REVIEW IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The effectiveness of peer review as a viable process for self-regulation in higher education depends heavily on the qualities of those who participate in it. At every step in the accreditation process educators from throughout the North Central region contribute their time and expertise to render the judgments and establish the policies that embody the Commission's primary purposes: institutional improvement and public certification of institutional quality.

The members of what the Commission calls its Consultant-Evaluator Corps serve in many roles. Consultant-Evaluators (C-Es) make each level of the Commission's evaluation process an exercise in peer review.

- ◊ As members of comprehensive or focused **Evaluation Teams** or of **Evaluators' Panels,** they examine institutional effectiveness, provide advice and counsel for institutional improvement, and recommend accrediting actions to the Commission;
- ◊ As members of the **Accreditation Review Council,** they participate in the review processes of the Commission as members of Review Committees and as readers in the Reader's Process, the next steps in the evaluation process following the team visit;
- ◊ As Commissioners serving on the 15-person **Commission,** they have responsibility for decisions on the affiliation of institutions, for the formulation of Commission policies, and for the oversight of Commission operations.

THE CONSULTANT-EVALUATOR CORPS

Drawn from large institutions and small, from long-established ones and new; from private institutions and public, church-related and secular; from vocational-technical institutes, community and junior colleges, four-year colleges, professional schools and universities; from towns of 500 and cities of several million, C-Es are as diverse as the Commission's member institutions. Such diversity makes genuine peer review a reality rather than a cliché. Yet for all their differences, the members of the Consultant-Evaluator Corps are similar in their willingness to give generously of their time and expertise, in their dedication to educational excellence, and in their commitment to the principles underlying voluntary accreditation.

Each year, the Commission strives, in inviting new educators to join the Corps, to reach its goals for a diverse and representative peer group that can effectively serve its purposes.

☐ The Role and Responsibilities of Consultant-Evaluators

The educators who make up the teams that visit institutions are charged with two primary responsibilities. As consultants, they offer advice to institutions to help them improve the quality of the education they provide, and as evaluators they evaluate and confirm the quality of an educational institution. The name Consultant-Evaluator is given to these educators to make sure both institutions and Evaluation Teams alike remain aware of this dual function.

Because the Commission bases its final evaluation decisions concerning higher education institutions on qualitative criteria rather than on inflexible or absolute quantitative standards, its Consultant-Evaluator Corps

plays a far more critical role in the accreditation process than would be the case if a more automatic or "checklist" approach to determining educational quality were used. The selection, training, and evaluation of C-Es is crucial to the effectiveness and integrity of the accreditation process, as is the formation of particular Evaluation Teams from the members of the Corps.

C-Es as "Generalists" rather than Specialists

Institutional accreditation by the Commission testifies to an institution's overall health and the general quality of its resources, processes, and achievements, but not necessarily to the merit of each specific individual program and component within the institution. Therefore, the Commission selects and prepares its C-Es to undertake institutional evaluation as generalists rather than as administrative or programmatic specialists. When the need for subject-area or functional-area specialists arises (e.g., to examine an institution's request to begin programs in health sciences, or to evaluate an institution's computer resources and plans), the Commission places a person with that expertise on a team; but C-Es are always cautioned not to confuse institutional and programmatic accreditation. Because of its expectation that C-Es serve as generalists, the Commission does not attempt, in forming a team to visit an institution, to assure that every subject-area specialty can be evaluated in depth.

Expectations of Evaluation Teams

If peer review is to maintain its credibility as an effective tool in self-regulation and self-improvement, then its teams—and all members on them—must be marked by the following qualities:

- **Professionalism.** Effective peer review requires that teams and individual C-Es fulfill their tasks in a professional manner.

  - ***Prepare.*** Commission visits are short (two or three days, typically), and Evaluation Teams are relatively small. These conditions emphasize the importance of each team member's being a good reader, absorbing as much information as possible before the team visit. C-Es must study Commission documents, read critically the institution's materials before the visit begins, and identify questions and issues for investigation before they arrive on campus. The ability of a team to conduct an effective and efficient evaluation rests heavily on the individual preparation of each of its members.

  - ***Make decisions.*** Teams are asked to exercise their best judgment in assessing an institution using the Commission's General Institutional Requirements and Criteria for Accreditation. Participation in an evaluation visit to an institution may require a C-E to make difficult decisions, whether positive or negative. The ability to discharge these responsibilities diligently and confidently, even in the face of conflicting personal feelings or preferences, characterizes the truly effective team and C-E.

  - ***Protect confidentiality.*** C-Es are expected to hold in confidence all information obtained from the evaluation visit, from discussions with other team members or with Commission staff, and from Commission file materials (previous team reports, correspondence, complaints, etc.). Because the team's written report of the visit is the document that represents the team's consensus judgment, individual C-Es should refrain from discussing the visit with anyone outside the Evaluation Team. If C-Es receive comments or questions from or about the institution they have visited, they should refer them to the Commission staff liaison or the Executive Director. Under no circumstances should they discuss the details of the team's deliberations or try to speak for the team.

  - ***Value collegiality.*** Serving on a team requires an individual to strike a balance between individual views and judgments and those held by colleagues. Just as team members share the

burdens of the evaluation visit, they are expected to strive for consensus in reaching decisions about an institution's accreditability and the reasons for it.

- **Competence.** Effective teams, and effective C-Es, need to call on particular competencies.
  - ***Interviewing and listening.*** During the evaluation visit the team will interact with a wide variety of people in many different settings. The team is there to learn about the institution in an effort to be fair in its evaluation of it. Therefore, it is critical not only that its members conduct penetrating, yet collegial, interviews, but that they are capable of hearing clearly the responses provided as well. Because the diversity of institutions evaluated by the Commission places C-Es in contact with others who may have significantly different cultural traditions and professional viewpoints, courtesy and empathy for others' feelings are hallmarks of the effective interviewer.
  - ***Effective writing.*** Although the ability to communicate orally is of critical importance for C-Es, the written team report is ultimately the vehicle by which a team informs the Commission of its evaluation and recommendations. Given this central role of the written word, fluency in writing is an indispensable skill for all C-Es, who must explain and document their conclusions and evaluations. In the end, it is the Team Chair's responsibility to collect and edit the team members' contributions into a single, coherent report; but that is possible only when the individual members perform the assignments given them and follow agreed-upon guidelines for their written sections of the report.
- **Objectivity.** One of the greatest challenges for teams and C-Es is to approach their task with objectivity.
  - ***Fairness.*** Most of what the Commission prescribes in evaluating an institution requires teams and C-Es to exercise judgment. C-Es must look for and document an overall "pattern of evidence" satisfying each of the Commission's Criteria, balancing an institution's strengths and weaknesses in reaching a judgment. Thoughtful evaluators are not satisfied by single opinions without validation; they seek and expect a pattern of evidence on which to base their conclusions. This expectation places an important responsibility on C-Es to be fair, to see all things in perspective and neither overlook nor be overpowered by an institution's individual virtues and faults.
  - ***Appreciation of good practice.*** Service on an Evaluation Team requires an understanding of the traditions and values of American higher education and the ability to identify what is appropriate for a particular institution in terms of the institution's mission and purposes; how well the institution has progressed since its last evaluation; and what is generally recognized as good practice at similar or "peer" institutions.
  - ***Ability to balance the roles of consultant and evaluator.*** To avoid confusing the institution or the Commission, C-Es need to balance and keep distinct their roles as evaluators and consultants. If, for any reason, conflict arises between the two roles, C-Es must view their function as evaluators and recommenders of Commission action as primary.

Teams and C-Es are evaluated regularly. Members of the team, the Team Chair, institutional representatives, and Commission staff members contribute to these evaluations. Areas of evaluation by team members include preparation, participation, professionalism, and judgment. Team Chairs comment on the quality and timeliness of the written materials submitted by team members. The evaluation process offers the Commission reasonable assurance that its C-Es fulfill the Commission's expectations, and assists the Commission staff in developing appropriate training and retraining programs as well as printed materials for new and experienced C-Es. Moreover, following Commission policy II.A.5, the Commission can terminate the service of a C-E who fails to fulfill expectations and requirements (for example, by engaging in discriminatory or harassing activities, failing to prepare, failing to meet established schedules, failing to maintain confidentiality, or failing to attend required Commission-sponsored training).

☐ Experience and Training of the Consultant-Evaluator Corps

During the late 1950's, the Commission developed and eventually adopted in policy the notion of selecting its accreditation teams from a trained and experienced corps of evaluators. In adopting this strategy, the Commission reasoned that it could enhance the reliability of its team evaluations by restricting the size of the corps from which team members were drawn. After making several visits over a relatively short period of time, C-Es bring to the evaluation process the wisdom and sensitivity accrued through those visits. Because the Commission employs teams that, collectively, embody much training and experience in conducting its evaluations, NCA Evaluation Teams tend to be smaller than those used by some of the other regional accrediting associations. Also, because of the Commission's commitment to peer review and the experience level of teams, it is unnecessary for Commission staff to accompany teams on visits. This experience level also ensures that new C-Es receive additional mentoring on site.

To ensure currency and vitality in the corps, the Commission invites every C-E to participate in one or two visits during each academic year. Consequently, the Commission remains committed to limiting the overall size of its Corps. On October 1, 1993, the Commission's Consultant-Evaluator Corps numbered 724; in addition, 118 administrators and faculty were invited to join the Corps at that time, to attend the Professional Development Program for new C-Es at the 1994 Annual Meeting, and to begin their service with the 1994-95 academic year.

NCA continues to improve the effectiveness of the Corps through enhanced training programs, especially those provided yearly for new and experienced C-Es in conjunction with the Annual Meeting; through continuing efforts to identify and recruit appropriate members; and through ongoing evaluation of the Corps. All C-Es must attend a Professional Development Program within two years of initial appointment.

☐ Terms of Service for Consultant-Evaluators

C-Es are initially appointed to the Corps for a trial period, during which they will normally be invited to participate in up to two evaluation visits each year. After completing the second visit (or at the end of three years, whichever comes first) the appointment will be reviewed. If invited to continue on the Corps, a C-E begins a five-year regular appointment.

Service on the Corps may be renewed or terminated for these reasons:

- ◇ At the completion of a regular five-year term of service, the Commission reviews a C-E's performance. Depending on its needs, the Commission may invite C-Es to reapply for reappointment for additional five-year terms.
- ◇ When a C-E moves from one Commission-accredited institution to another, his or her place on the Corps will be reviewed.
- ◇ C-Es who resign or retire from full-time employment at their institutions, who move out of the North Central Association's 19-state region, or who accept a position at an unaccredited institution within the region are no longer eligible for service in the Consultant-Evaluator Corps.
- ◇ C-Es who cease to be employed full-time at Commission-accredited institutions, or whose employers place them upon leave status (sabbatical, medical, etc.), are asked to notify the Executive Director immediately. In some cases, the C-E may be placed on inactive status within the Consultant-Evaluator Corps for up to a one-year period.
- ◇ A C-E who is employed at an institution that is placed on Probation by the Commission will be placed on inactive status until the Probation is removed.
- ◇ C-Es who fail to fulfill the Professional Development requirement will be removed from the Corps.

☐ The Team Chair Corps

Within the Consultant-Evaluator Corps the Commission has identified a Team Chair Corps. From this Corps the staff typically selects those C-Es who chair Evaluation Teams. C-Es may seek to be invited to join the Team Chair Corps by participating in a special professional development program for new Team Chairs offered at the Annual Meeting. (In addition, C-Es who, at the request of staff, serve as Team Chairs are automatically invited to join the Team Chair Corps.) In agreeing to be on the Team Chair Corps, a C-E automatically initiates a new five-year term as a C-E, and agrees to attend at least one Team Chair Professional Development Program during that five-year term. A C-E may resign from the Team Chair Corps at any time and still remain in the Consultant-Evaluator Corps for the remainder of the current term of service.

☐ Scheduling Visits and Team Invitations

The Commission follows a number of standard practices in arranging evaluation visits.

- **Invitations to serve.** In late spring, the Commission staff plans most of the team visits for the coming year. Suggested team members are submitted to the institution being visited in order to discover possible conflicts of interest and to identify potential problems. Then, in May, June, or July, the Commission mails invitations to participate to individual C-E's. If C-E's find that previously-scheduled commitments make participation impossible, the process is repeated until the team is complete, at which time the institution and each C-E receives an updated team roster (Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet) and other materials related to the visit. Generally, teams are complete at least two months before the date the visit is scheduled to begin.

  New evaluation visits are added to the Commission's schedule throughout the year. These visits may occur for a variety of reasons, including the need for an on-site evaluation to review a request for initial status or for a proposed institutional change. C-E's may receive invitations to participate in one of these added Commission evaluations at any time during the year.

- **Frequency of visits.** C-Es serving on the Corps are normally invited to participate in up to two visits per year, usually one in the fall and one in the spring. Rarely, when circumstances and Commission needs require, a C-E may be invited for three visits in one year. Each year, however, some C-Es may receive no invitations because of the unique nature of the visits scheduled for that year.

- **Accepting the invitation.** In reviewing their calendars before accepting an invitation, C-Es should remember that the commitment for a visit is significant.

  - ◇ Most comprehensive evaluation visits, although formally three days, require four days including travel time. One of those days will fall on a weekend, typically Sunday. Team members arrive in the late afternoon on the day before the visit formally begins, and participate fully through the exit interview that is held the afternoon of the last formal day of the visit.

  - ◇ Immediately following the visit, members of the team will be involved in writing parts of the Team Report and revising the report before its submission to the institution and, ultimately, to the Commission.

  - ◇ The Commission understands that C-Es have many pressures and obligations other than evaluation visits, but trusts that a C-E who wishes to remain active in the Corps will make every effort to accept an invitation to participate in a visit. It is, however, easier to replace a C-E on a team at the invitation stage than it is later in the process. Therefore, if a high likelihood exists that schedule conflicts will cause a C-E to resign from a team later, declining the original invitation to serve is preferable.

- **Handling emergencies.** Time and communication constraints often may make it impossible to substitute team members less than a month before a scheduled evaluation visit. Nevertheless, if unavoidable conditions make it necessary for C-Es to withdraw from a visit, they should notify the Commission staff as early as possible. The withdrawing C-E is responsible for seeing that all Commission and institution materials are forwarded promptly to any replacement.

☐ Avoiding Conflict of Interest

C-Es must be able to examine and evaluate institutions objectively. In an effort to guard against the appearance of conflict of interest in the Commission's processes, staff build all teams following specific Commission guidelines that flow from Commission policies. Commission policy prohibits a C-E's evaluation of an institution located in the C-E's home state, an institution at which the C-E was or is now an employee, or an institution from which the C-E graduated. Commission policy normally prohibits the use of C-Es on visits to institutions they have evaluated in the previous five years (unless the institution explicitly approves such participation), and tradition generally guards against C-Es being invited to visit institutions for two successive comprehensive Commission evaluations. In general, the same principles should apply if a C-E has visited an institution for specialized or programmatic accreditation.

However, since staff cannot know of every possible conflict of interest, C-Es themselves are asked to refuse invitations or assignments if any conflict of interest might be possible.

- **Personal/professional relationships.** C-Es should disqualify themselves from participation in evaluating institutions where they have or where they are seeking employment, where they have served as a paid or unpaid consultant, or where any other set of circumstances would inhibit their ability to evaluate the institution objectively. Similarly, personal relationships (relatives work for the institution, classmates with key administrators or faculty) may prevent C-Es from evaluating the institution fairly. Prominent and active educators often have a wide circle of acquaintances in a variety of institutions, so mere acquaintance with persons at an institution being evaluated does not, in itself, render a C-E ineligible to visit that institution. What matters is the level of the relationship, whether it is likely to color the C-E's judgment or affect the C-E's willingness to make particular recommendations.

- **Preconceived judgments.** Good or bad, the reputations of many institutions precede them. C-Es who have serious difficulty objectively judging an institution about which they have already formed a strong impression from second-hand or unsubstantiated evidence should decline the invitation to evaluate that institution. The Commission accredits a variety of institutions, public and private, non-profit and for-profit, secular and religious, undergraduate and graduate, general and special purpose. C-Es may be invited to participate in the evaluation of an institution from a category for or against which they have developed strong negative opinions. If this occurs, C-Es should decline the invitation, and should discuss with the Commission staff the nature and basis for their beliefs so they will not be invited for similar evaluations in the future.

These guidelines also govern the Commission's choices of participants in other review processes (e.g., Readers' or Evaluators' Panels and Review Committees).

☐ Consultant-Evaluators and Outside Consulting

A C-E must use good judgment in seeking or accepting consulting assignments with institutions affiliated with the Commission. Commission policy stipulates that to avoid the appearance of possible conflict of interest in the accreditation process. No member of the team that evaluated an institution may serve as a consultant to that institution for a period of one year following the official Commission accrediting action. Any C-E who violates this policy will be dropped automatically from the C-E Corps.

From time to time, Commission staff provide to institutions and to other agencies names of C-Es whose services might be useful. In doing so, the staff is recognizing the professional competencies of the C-Es, not proposing that they serve in an official or semi-official capacity for the Commission.

C-Es should never claim to possess special or "inside" information on determinations that the Commission will make on accreditation or related policies, or to be able to ensure that an institution will meet Commission expectations. C-Es should not refer to service with the Commission on business cards or letterhead, nor should they include in professional resumes a list of all the visits on which they have participated.

OTHER ROLES OF CONSULTANT-EVALUATORS

☐ Accreditation Review Council Members

Accreditation Review Council (ARC) members are current Consultant-Evaluators who have been elected to four-year terms under procedures established by the Commission Rules of Procedure to participate in the Commission's review processes. The primary responsibility of this group of approximately 110 ARC members is service as Readers and Review Committee members.

As Readers, ARC members examine the documents resulting from the evaluation visit to determine whether further review is necessary before final action is taken by the Commission. As Review Committee members, they meet with representatives of the team and the institution at periodic meetings in Chicago to discuss the documents and to forward a recommendation to the Commission for final action. They also serve as Advisory Panel members, providing advice and assistance to Commission staff on various matters related to the evaluation process.

☐ Commissioners

Commissioners make up the decision and policy making body of the Commission. They are responsible for decisions on the accreditation of institutions, for the formulation of Commission policies, and for oversight of Commission operations. The Commission is comprised of 15 persons: 12 are C-Es and are actively and officially connected with member institutions, while three are public representatives. The Commission meets four times a year and conducts business with the help of its three standing committees: The Executive Committee, the Committee on Institutional Actions, and the Committee on Commission Programs and Activities. A current roster of Commission members appears in the Appendix.

Commissioners may serve on Evaluation Teams with reasonable frequency. They do not serve as Team Chairs. In addition, Commissioners do not participate on Readers' Panels, Evaluators' Panels, or Review Committees. Commissioners do not participate in Commission discussion and voting related to final actions on institutions located in their individual states, on institutions that they have visited for the Commission, and on institutions about which they have identified other potential conflicts of interest.

☐ Association Appeals Panel

C-Es also serve on the Association Appeals Panel. The Appeals Panel is comprised of 12 persons—six from the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education and six from the Commission on Schools—elected for terms ending in different years. If an appeal is made from an accrediting decision of either Commission, a committee to hear the appeal is drawn from the panel. More members than are necessary to form a committee are available on the panel to permit choices that avoid conflict of interest.

JOINING THE CONSULTANT-EVALUATOR CORPS

Approximately 80-100 new evaluators a invited to join the Corps each year when current C-Es' terms of service expire or when they retire, leave the region, or for other reasons become ineligible to continue. The Commission fills these vacancies with educators who have the skills and talents needed to meet the special needs for upcoming evaluation visits. Preference may be given to persons from underrepresented states or unrepresented institutions. In selecting people for the Corps, the Commission does not discriminate on matters of race, creed, gender, sexual orientation, or physical disabilities.

Faculty and administrators at accredited institutions who meet these criteria may be invited to join the Consultant-Evaluator Corps:

- ◇ They are official and active full-time employees of higher education institutions currently accredited by the North Central Association, or they are public members of the Commission, or they are members of institutional governing boards;
- ◇ They provide evidence that their training, experience, and accomplishments will contribute judgment and expertise to the accreditation process;
- ◇ They meet the projected future needs of the Commission for team members and Evaluators' Panel members—possessing, collectively, those characteristics critical in the formation of teams and panels (i.e., academic discipline, administrative skills, professional competencies, institutional experience, state of residence, etc.);
- ◇ They represent the diversity of people—professional administrators and faculty; men and women; people of all racial, ethnic, religious, and national backgrounds—engaged in higher education in all geographical areas within the 19-state North Central region;
- ◇ They are able and willing to commit to the Commission the time and energy necessary for the accreditation process to move smoothly.

New C-Es are selected by the Commission staff under the oversight of the Commission's Committee on Commission Programs and Activities. Selections are based on the needs of the C-E Corps for the next several evaluation cycles and the number of slots available to be filled. Because of the number of applications received, applicants must be considered in light of the specific goals of the Commission (e.g., desire for diversity on the Corps, types and subjects of projected evaluation visits, characteristics of institutions scheduled for visits, etc.), not all of the applicants can be invited to join the Corps. Appointments for the next evaluation cycle (academic year) are made in October of the previous evaluation cycle. Any eligible person who would like to be considered for the Corps can request a Professional Data Form (PDF) from the Commission office. The PDF serves as the official application. CEOs are informed of all appointments to the Corps from their institutions.

7 Logistics for Evaluation Visits

INSTITUTIONAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE EVALUATION VISIT

☐ Initiating the Evaluation Process

Institutions currently affiliated with the Commission are scheduled for evaluation by previous Commission action. Approximately two years before that scheduled evaluation, the Commission staff liaison sends the Executive Officer a reminder letter about the forthcoming evaluation visit. In response, the Executive Officer:

- ◇ confirms or requests changes in the institution's status with the Commission;
- ◇ names the institution's Self-Study Coordinator;
- ◇ provides three possible dates for the evaluation visit.

At this time, the institution begins to develop for itself and the Commission a plan for its self-study process that briefly describes the study's design, strategies, and timetable.

One year before the evaluation visit, the institution receives another letter of reminder. In response, the Executive Officer confirms the time and purpose of the scheduled visit and indicates the competencies the institution would like to see represented on the Evaluation Team. Focused evaluations called for by previous Commission actions follow this same procedure.

☐ Choosing the Dates for the Visit

Establishing the evaluation date at this time enables the institution to develop a solid time line for its preparations and enables the Commission to begin coordinating the approximately 200 evaluations that will occur in most annual evaluation cycles.

- ◇ The institution is asked to suggest three possible dates for the evaluation visit.
- ◇ The Commission will give preference to the institution's first choice and will notify the institution only if the first choice of dates cannot be honored.
- ◇ The second reminder letter is sent approximately one year before the visit; the Commission will reconfirm the scheduled date. The institution may request a change in the evaluation dates at this time.
- ◇ The institution makes a firm commitment to the visit dates when it approves the proposed team.

In choosing the dates for the visit, an institution should be sure:

- ◇ that faculty and administration will be available;
- ◇ that students will be in classes;
- ◇ that other scheduled campus activities will not make it difficult for the team to do its work;

- ◇ that the date will permit timely action (e.g., if the evaluation includes a request for changes or if it is for initial candidacy or initial accreditation, the institution will want to consider the date of final Commission action, perhaps several months after the team visit, and choose a date that will permit timely action);

- ◇ that the visit will not conflict with the schedule of professional meetings that might involve people from the campus or members of the team (e.g., the NCA Annual Meeting, AACJC, AAHE). The Commission calendar of Review Committees, Commission meetings, and the Annual Meeting is published in the *Briefing* newsletter.

Experience shows that teams prefer visits that begin on Monday. This allows them to travel on Sunday (some take advantage of less expensive airplane fares by traveling on Saturday) and will return home by the end of the last day of the visit.

☐ Rescheduling the Evaluation Visit

Sometimes visits are cancelled or postponed at the institution's initiative. On rare occasions rescheduling is necessary very close to the time of the visit. When significant events occur beyond the control of the institution and the Commission, the Commission staff should be notified immediately and be given the opportunity to decide in consultation with the institution whether the visit should proceed as planned or be rescheduled. If the visit is cancelled or postponed at the institution's request, the Commission will refund all fees paid for that evaluation less any expenses incurred (e.g., penalties for cancelled plane tickets).

☐ The Selection of the Evaluation Team

During the year before the visit, the institution is invited to suggest to the staff liaison the areas of expertise and kinds of institutions it would like to see represented on the Evaluation Team. The staff liaison keeps these suggestions in mind in composing an appropriate team from among the members of the Consultant-Evaluator Corps. (In exceptional cases where an institutional evaluation requires a professional background that no current member of the Corps has, the staff may suggest educators from outside of the Corps or outside of the region.)

Several months before the visit is to take place, the staff member sends a roster of proposed Evaluation Team members to the Executive Officer of the institution for comment. This list is accompanied by Professional Data Forms providing information on each proposed team member's current position, experience, and areas of expertise. The institution should express any concerns or reservations it may have about any of the proposed team members, and these concerns are considered when the Commission staff member develops the final team. The Commission reserves the right to make the final choice of all Evaluation Teams and it has determined that staff will take into account the Commission's commitment to equity and diversity in the composition of teams. It also makes every effort to alleviate serious institutional concerns about a proposed team member. The institution is consulted on any subsequent changes in the team's makeup because of such things as scheduling conflicts and emergencies.

The institution should not contact team members until it has been advised that the team is complete.

☐ The Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet

Once team members accept an evaluation assignment, the Commission formally notifies the institution and the team and distributes an **Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet** (EVSS). This document provides a brief description of both the institution and the visit, including the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the executive officer, the team members, and the Commission staff liaison.

☐ Observers

From time to time institutions ask whether observers—representatives from national church boards or state regents, for example—may be present during the team visit. The staff will consider each request on a case-by-case basis. The Team Chair, the institution, and the Commission staff liaison must agree that the observer may be present. The Team Chair must assure that the observer does not participate in the team's final decision.

☐ Logistical Arrangements

Either the Executive Officer or the Team Chair will make hotel reservations for the team. If possible, a meeting room should be reserved at the hotel for team meetings. A meeting and work room will also be needed on campus. That meeting room will house the institutional materials the team will need for review and reference. Secretarial assistance is also desirable; in recent years some teams have sought ready access to a personal computer and a private telephone.

Some Team Chairs want to schedule in advance meetings with key personnel: members of the governing board, representatives of the state coordinating board or other related agency, faculty representatives, student representatives, and alumni and community leaders.

Most Chairs schedule special meetings with the governing board and hold open meetings for faculty and staff. The institution should announce the visit, schedule time slots, and ask its people to be on campus, available to the team. The institution might host a meal function or social hour at its own expense some time during the visit; typically, such an event is small and allows the team to accomplish some of its work (e.g., a luncheon or dinner meeting with trustees or department chairs).

Teams do not expect gifts and institutions should not offer them. A souvenir (e.g., a mug) might be an appropriate token of appreciation from the institution. However, the Commission expects that its teams will not be offered gifts that could in any way be perceived as influencing their objectivity.

☐ Budgeting for the Evaluation Process

The Commission bills the institution for the evaluation according to its current Evaluation Fee Schedule (see Chapter 10). The institution must pay the evaluation fee at least one month before the evaluation visit. In some cases, the visit may be billed on the basis of actual costs plus a flat fee for administrative expenses. In those cases, the Commission may require a deposit before the visit.

When it pays that fee, the institution has no more financial responsibilities for the team's transportation, housing, and meals except for the limited social event it might choose to host. Team members expect to pay for their own expenses, including their hotel bills. Unless special arrangements are made with the staff, institutions should not attempt to pay bills that clearly belong to the team, for such attempts simply lead to misunderstandings that interfere with the visit. An institution is not obligated to transport the team during the visit, but if it does provide a car or livery service, it absorbs those costs.

In budgeting for the self-study and evaluation processes, an institution should include:

- ◇ overhead, such as released time for the Self-Study Coordinator, secretarial help, costs of gathering data, postage, and special equipment;
- ◇ costs of printing multiple copies of the Self-Study Report and other documents;
- ◇ the fixed fee; and
- ◇ limited entertainment expenses.

Some visits require a Review Committee appearance (see Chapter 9); in these cases the institution should budget for travel and lodging for two or three people to come to Chicago. Some evaluations may require a pre-visit by the Team Chair; in these cases the institution is billed on the basis of actual cost plus 10% for administration (see Chapter 11).

☐ Materials for the Evaluation Process

The institution sends its Self-Study Report, completed Basic Institutional Data forms, and the latest institutional catalog(s) and faculty and student handbooks to the Commission and to all team members. The Commission sends to the team relevant materials from its files (see Chapter 10).

☐ Announcing the Visit

The institution should announce the dates of the team's visit in appropriate publications to all its constituencies. People at an institution should understand the typical flow of a team visit; they should know the people who definitely will be interviewed; they should know when the team will hold open meetings. Too frequently people on campus expect that all team contacts will be through formal, scheduled interviews, and they forego the open meetings and wait for team members to come to them. Teams have limited time and extensive responsibilities, and even the tightest schedule will not allow teams to spend time with everyone on campus. Many teams mix formal and informal interviews; they might meet in a scheduled session with student government leaders, for example, but they might also simply scatter themselves through the cafeteria during lunch and speak with random groups of students. Teams also have to spend considerable time reading additional materials prepared for their on-site review and, therefore, they will not be continually interacting with people on the campus.

☐ Making the Most of the Evaluation Visit

The institutions that derive the greatest benefit from evaluation visits are those with a clear and accurate sense of their strengths and their concerns. They are also the institutions that have prepared the total institutional community for the visit.

Evaluation Teams fill a dual role: they certify and they consult. When teams are struggling to uncover information related to certification, they tend not to be as useful in their consulting capacities. When they do provide informal observations and advice, these are sometimes misinterpreted and a comment is taken as an indictment. The best advice for an institution is to wait for the exit session and the Team Report to review the team's final evaluation. Those two formal parts of the visit will place many of the informal interchanges in a clearer context.

However, institutional representatives should speak with the Self-Study Coordinator if, during the visit, they are concerned that the team may be overlooking an important aspect of the institution. While the institution cannot tell the team how to conduct its visit, it can certainly express to the Team Chair any concerns it might have as the visit is progressing.

Teams cannot solve major problems; teams cannot resolve internal disputes. Institutions that politicize the visit only make it harder for the team to conduct an objective review. An institution experiencing tension is advised to do everything possible to assist the team in understanding the major factors contributing to the tension.

Candid communication, realistic expectations, institutional preparation, and open cooperation are the factors that make a team visit as productive to an institution as possible. In very unique situations when institutional cooperation is lacking, the Executive Director may terminate a visit.

TEAM PREPARATIONS FOR THE VISIT

☐ Establishing Lines of Communication

When notified that the team is complete, the Team Chair is asked to contact the institution's Executive Officer to make arrangements for the visit. (Team members should not contact the institution individually.) Together, the Team Chair and the Executive Officer

- ◇ identify the key people at the institution who will be interviewed during the team visit,
- ◇ make arrangements for the team's hotel accommodations,
- ◇ agree on the materials and facilities that will be at the team's disposal while they are on campus, and
- ◇ discuss any other aspects of the visit that need to be worked out beforehand.

Because teams are often completed months before a visit is scheduled to occur, the Team Chair should make an initial contact with the institution and the team soon after the team is complete to let them know when more specific details of the visit will be forthcoming. If subsequent changes in the team are made, care should be taken by the Team Chair to use the most recent Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet (EVSS) in communicating with the team.

In special cases, the Chair may arrange for a **pre-visit** if the institution requests it and the Commission staff concurs. Pre-visits are scheduled only when an institution believes that its structure or geographical locations will require substantial advance discussion (see Chapter 11).

☐ Planning for the Visit

The Team Chair writes to the team members to inform them of preliminary arrangements for the visit. Throughout the planning process, the Team Chair keeps team members informed of how arrangements are progressing. Team members need information about arrival time, housing, the time and place of their first team meeting, when they can expect to finish their work, and a variety of other practical matters.

In addition to an EVSS, the Team Chair receives a **Professional Data Form** for each of the team members. These forms provide information about the background and competencies of each member of the team. The Team Chair should also use the Professional Data Form information to develop a tentative evaluation plan and division of responsibilities. By sharing the plan with the team some weeks before the visit, the Chair might make important adjustments before the first team meeting. The Chair should stress that each team member is to become familiar with all of the institution's written materials before the visit takes place.

If the team includes a new member of the corps, the Chair should arrange for that person to work with more experienced members of the team.

☐ Analyzing the Materials for the Visit

Before the visit, team members thoroughly study all of the materials they have received from the institution and the Commission. Since the self-study process has taken many months, it is important that each member of the team understand the nature of the process. It may be comprehensive, comprehensive with specific emphases, or topical. It may also be built around a current special institutional study or around documents that have been produced by a regular institutional research program. The Commission staff will make any special

aspects (such as special emphases) of the self-study design known to the team through a Memo of Understanding, and the institution will describe them in its Self-Study Report.

The Self-Study Report is the team's basic reference during the visit, since the report is required to demonstrate clearly and explicitly that the institution satisfies the Criteria for Accreditation or the Candidacy Program. As they read it before the visit, the Team Chair and the team members will want to ask themselves a number of questions.

- ◇ Does the report show that the institution has engaged in a genuine, useful self-study process?
- ◇ Does the Self-Study Report contain the information required by the Commission as described in Chapter 5?
- ◇ Does it adequately demonstrate that the General Institutional Requirements are met?
- ◇ Does it adequately demonstrate that the institution fulfills the Criteria for Accreditation or the Candidacy Program? If it does not, what further information is required? What needs amplification, clarification, or special examination?
- ◇ Has the institution addressed the concerns identified by the previous Evaluation Team?
- ◇ Does the institution have, or is it developing, an appropriate program for documenting student academic achievement (see Chapter 14)?
- ◇ Is the Self-Study Report sufficiently evaluative?
- ◇ Are there inconsistencies between the Self-Study Report and information in the Basic Institutional Data Forms, the catalog(s), the faculty or student handbooks, or the Annual Report?
- ◇ Are there inconsistencies between the information in the Self-Study Report and that provided in the materials the team received from the Commission?
- ◇ Who are the key people to interview?
- ◇ What functions, operations, or program areas deserve special attention?
- ◇ What institutional strengths and concerns does the Self-Study Report identify? Is there a plan for responding to the concerns?

It is important for the team to remember that its charge is to evaluate the institution, not just the Self-Study Report. A poor Self-Study Report may make a team's task more difficult, but it does not necessarily mean that an institution does not fulfill the Criteria; conversely, a well-written Self-Study Report is not a substitute for fulfilling the Criteria. Sometimes Team Chairs conclude that the team needs further information or documentation before it arrives on campus. Before asking the institution to supply extra materials, the Team Chair should contact the Commission staff.

The Commission also sends information to the team and the institution for review before the evaluation visit. After examining all of these materials, the team should be prepared to approach its first team meeting with a clear idea of questions and areas it will want to discuss and examine during the evaluation.

Since each team member's familiarity with Commission policies and procedures will differ, one of the Team Chair's major responsibilities throughout the evaluation visit will be to orient the team to the Commission's philosophy and practices. The *Handbook of Accreditation* is required reading for every team member. In addition, the Commission staff may distribute specific policy statements that apply to a particular evaluation. The Team Chair must serve as the on-site guide for the application and interpretation of these documents as bases for the team's evaluation and recommendation.

☐ The Commission Staff's Role during the Team Visit

Just as the Commission staff provides assistance to institutions in preparing for the evaluation, it also provides assistance as needed to Team Chairs and team members. Well before the visit is conducted, the Team Chair should discuss with the staff liaison any questions, particularly those about the adequacy of the size and/or expertise of the team. During the visit, the Team Chair or the chief executive officer of the institution may call the Commission staff liaison to clarify Commission policy, to discuss special situations or concerns, or to confirm that the team is accurately describing the Commission's processes. Situations where the Team Chair should contact the staff liaison include:

- ◊ confusion about the purpose of the evaluation visit
- ◊ inability to reach consensus on the team recommendation
- ◊ questions about options available to the team in making its recommendation
- ◊ team recommendations involving sanctions, denial of an institutional request, or the withdrawal of status
- ◊ disputes over Commission policies or practices

In preparing the Team Report, the Team Chair may seek advice from the Commission staff concerning its organization and content. The Team Chair is asked to send copies of any correspondence related to the evaluation to the Commission staff member assigned to the institution.

Because the Commission believes that the accreditation process is based on the principle of peer review, a member of the Commission staff rarely joins an Evaluation Team, and then only as an observer and with the institution's approval.

☐ Team Expenses

Team members should pay their own travel, hotel, and meal expenses during the visit, and then submit their expense vouchers to the Commission office when they return to their home campuses. Expenses should not be billed to the institution or directly to the Commission. The Commission promptly reimburses travel and subsistence expenses incurred by the team. Team members receive expense vouchers before an evaluation visit. Guidelines for reimbursable expenses are provided in "Policies and Procedures for Persons Traveling on Commission Business" available from the Commission office. Failure to follow established procedures can delay reimbursement.

CONDUCTING THE EVALUATION VISIT

☐ Length of the Evaluation Visit

An evaluation for initial or continued accreditation or initial candidacy normally lasts three days; an evaluation for continued candidacy usually lasts two days. The day before the visit is to begin and the last day of the visit are partially devoted to travel to and from the institution; the remainder of the visit is spent on the institutional evaluation. However, if circumstances warrant it, the Team Chair may extend the visit beyond its scheduled length after consulting with the Commission staff.

Team members arrive **the day before the visit officially begins** for an initial team meeting. The Team Chair will have earlier notified each of them of the time of the meeting. Together, the Team Chair and the Executive

Officer will have decided either to arrange an informal dinner for the team to meet representatives of the institution or to leave the first evening free for the team to begin its work. If a social function is scheduled, it should be both early and brief.

☐ The First Team Meeting

At the team's first business meeting, the Team Chair should review the specific plans for the evaluation visit, establish final assignments, and make each team member's report-writing responsibilities clear. The Team Chair should also use the first business meeting to clarify the team's task, concentrate its attention, and establish a unified attitude toward the evaluation.

With these ideas and objectives in mind, the Team Chair usually establishes an agenda for the first team meeting that resembles the following.

- **Orientation.** Review the General Institutional Requirements, the Criteria for Accreditation, and the *Handbook of Accreditation*. Remind the team that all evaluation materials, conferences, conclusions, and recommendations are to be kept confidential.

- **Preliminary Impressions.** Have an open exchange of preliminary reactions to the written materials the Evaluation Team has studied. Allow team members to share their analyses of the materials and identify any areas of conflicting opinion. Guard against *a priori* conclusions, but use this discussion to establish working hypotheses as points of departure for the team's first day of work.

- **Schedule and Assignments.** Plan individual and team activities and establish a tentative timetable for each day. Assign responsibilities for interviews. During most evaluations, governing board members, every officer of the institution, every division/department head, and as many faculty members as possible should be consulted. In a small institution, every faculty member should have an opportunity to speak with some member of the team and as many students as possible should also be interviewed. The Evaluation Team will usually want to schedule and publicize an "open time" when team members will be available to speak to anyone who wants to see them. At Evaluation Team meetings throughout the evaluation visit, the Team Chair will want to check on the team's progress in interviewing campus people so that as many people as possible are seen, and no one who must be seen is omitted.

- **The Team Report.** Compiling the final report is the Team Chair's responsibility, but team members are expected to draft those parts of the report that the Team Chair assigns them. For the evaluation process to function on schedule, each team member must complete thoroughly and promptly the writing he or she has been asked to do. It is critical that the Chair inform team members of how the report will be handled. Some Team Chairs prefer to have a rough draft of the Team Report completed before they leave campus; others request that sections be submitted within a week of the visit. The Team Chair may suggest that, while rough drafts are to be submitted by the end of the visit, anyone who wishes to write a more polished version for submission after he or she returns home is welcome to do so. But if the Chair wants to have a draft report in hand before leaving the campus, it will be necessary to encourage team members to record their reactions, questions, and judgments throughout the visit rather than waiting until the end.

- **Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status.** Before the evaluation visit, the Evaluation Team will receive a Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status (SAS) and the latest SISA from the Commission. The Worksheet should be reviewed at the first Team meeting. In the course of the visit, the team will need to verify the accuracy of the information currently listed on the SAS. The Worksheet also will include any changes the institution is seeking approval for as a part of the current evaluation. The team will want to determine whether any additional changes are contemplated. At the conclusion of the visit the team will use the SAS Worksheet to develop its formal recommendation to the Commission. The team confirms the accuracy of the SISA and reports to the staff any required corrections.

☐ Meetings with the Executive Officer

The Evaluation Team's first conference on the morning the evaluation visit officially begins should be with the Executive Officer of the institution and anyone else the Executive Officer invites to attend. The Executive Officer will welcome the Evaluation Team, make some opening remarks about the institution and the visit, and perhaps introduce several key members of the administrative staff; the Team Chair will introduce the members of the team. This meeting is more than a social occasion; it establishes the tenor of the visit. The Executive Officer should be prepared to answer any initial questions the team may want to pose, and the team should be prepared to pose them. **The Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status and the SISA should be reviewed for accuracy.** It is also useful for the Team Chair to state officially why the team is there (e.g., "to conduct a comprehensive evaluation for continued accreditation at the bachelor's degree-granting level") to make certain that there is no confusion. **If confusion does exist, the Team Chair should contact the Commission staff immediately.** The team may also use this meeting to confirm appointments with various members of the administration, faculty, staff, and governing board.

Whether the Chair or another member of the team conducts the interview, it is essential that the Executive Officer be interviewed at times in addition to the initial and final conferences.

Periodically during the visit the Chair should check back with the Executive Officer to ensure that appropriate interviews are being conducted. The Team Chair should keep a record of interviews. This alleviates the post-visit confusion that occurs when disagreements arise about whether certain interviews were conducted.

☐ Data Gathering and Evaluation

Sound recommendations and decisions on whether an institution meets the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation require a firm base of accurate data and other information. No single method of assembling and analyzing this information can be specified. However, there are some general principles that should guide the Evaluation Team during the visit.

- ◊ The team must judge the institution **as a whole.** Therefore, the team needs to make sure that it has sufficient information found in the Self-Study Report about the entire institution for its deliberations.

- ◊ In a **comprehensive evaluation with special emphases,** documentation that the institution meets the General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for Accreditation should be complete, even if less voluminous. However, unless the first day of the visit provides reason to doubt the accuracy of the information, the team should spend more time focusing on the special emphases than on confirming that the Criteria are met.

- ◊ Since the collection of data about an institution could be endless, the team needs to determine the extent and the kinds of data it must have to make its evaluation. This determination should be based on the level of detail appropriate to the judgment to be rendered—a judgment on the institution as a whole rather than on every single activity within it. The financial condition of the institution is important, for example, but the information the team needs about finances typically can be found in summary audit reports rather than in extensive examination of every item of expenditure unless the audit reports raise concerns.

- ◊ If the institution has a procedure for accomplishing a particular task, the team's responsibility is to examine the procedure and its application in a few cases, not to examine each application individually as if a guiding procedure were not in place.

- ◊ Sampling, where appropriate, can be an efficient way to obtain needed information in the limited time available to a team. Sampling assumes that a few randomly chosen individual cases will

represent a whole group reasonably well. These are some examples of where the method can be useful.

- *Faculty credentials.* Characteristics of the faculty as a whole often can be determined from a representative sample of credentials.
- *Student records.* Examination of selected student records sheds light on whether admissions policies are followed, whether general course requirements are enforced, and whether graduation requirements are met.
- *Library holdings.* Spot checks of randomly selected sections of the holdings give a basis for judging the adequacy of the collection for the institution's purposes.
- *Student papers.* Course papers, theses, and dissertations provide evidence of the standards to which students are held for graduation.
- *Interviews.* In large and complex institutions, sampling select individual students, faculty members, administrators, and persons from other groups can provide information about the views of such groups on institutional activities. The team should plan to interview a representative sample of the institution's administrators, division/department heads, faculty, and students. Often, group interviews conducted by individual team members are the most efficient way to speak to as many people as possible.

In many cases, the Evaluation Team will determine that adequate information about various aspects of the institution appears in its Self-Study Report and related documents. In such cases, informal verification of some of that information by sampling will often allow the team to use the rest of the Self-Study Report with confidence in its correctness and completeness. There is no point in the team's trying to collect for itself information that is already available in the institution's written documents.

Team Meetings

The Team Chair should organize each team meeting carefully, deciding in advance what needs to be accomplished. Each meeting will usually include brief reports from team members on the areas they have been examining and discussion of those areas by the entire team.

A major strength of every evaluation is the exchange that goes on within the team's meetings. Team members pool their experiences and resources, stimulate and question one another, search and argue, until points are clear and consensus has been reached. In most cases, the team will make its decisions through such consensus rather than through fiat or majority vote. Part of the reason for having the team lodged in the same place is that proximity facilitates the exchange of ideas, opinions, and information necessary to reach consensus.

The Team Chair should make sure that team meetings run efficiently and end at a reasonable time. A closing hour for evening meetings should be set and honored. At each meeting before the last, the team should review its progress and, if necessary, revise the remainder of its schedule to pursue issues that need further clarification.

At its final meeting, the team seeks agreement on the proposed content of its report and on its formal recommendation. The Team Chair should make clear his/her expectations of team members for the timing and content of the Team Report. If one or more team members dissent strongly from the team consensus, they may file a minority report of their own. The Team Chair should consult with the Commission staff in these unusual situations.

Finally, at the last team meeting the team should prepare for the exit session with the institution's officers. It should agree on the strengths and concerns it wishes to emphasize, on whether the Team Chair or the various team members will present the team's views, and on what its recommendation will be. At this point, if questions are raised about the content of the recommendation or the options available, particularly **if the team is considering imposing a sanction, the Team Chair should call the Commission staff.**

> At any point in these meetings, if team members disagree over matters of Commission policy and practice, the Chair should contact the Commission staff. If they are considering a recommendation that will involve denial of an institution's request or a recommendation of Probation, Evaluation Teams are encouraged to contact the Commission staff liaison before holding the exit session.

☐ The Exit Session

Before leaving campus, the entire team meets with the Executive Officer and those the Executive Officer invites, to summarize its findings and report its recommendation. This exit session should provide the institution with an oral preview of **all the major points** that will appear in the Team Report.

Many Chairs find it good practice to meet with the Executive Officer alone before the exit session to explain briefly the contents of the team's oral report. This is especially important if the team's recommendation clearly will be a disappointment to the institution.

It is imperative that both the content and the tone of this oral report be consistent with the written report the institution will later receive. The oral report should leave no doubt about the team's judgments and, after it, the written report should hold no surprises. The team must accurately report what its recommendation will be. It should emphasize the fact that, positive or negative, the recommendation must proceed through the other Commission processes that may or may not alter it.

When the team's oral report is completed, the Executive Officer may raise questions about it. If the Executive Officer or other administrators believe that the team has been misinformed or has misunderstood something important, they should say so; the team should be prepared to double-check if its facts are questioned. However, **both the team and the institution's representatives should avoid turning the exit session into a debate.** The institution will be given an opportunity to file a formal, written response to the final Team Report, and that response is the proper place for challenging the team's interpretations or judgments. Based on the team's presentation in the exit session, the institution should have enough information to begin preparing its written response even before it receives the final report.

Normally, the team departs directly after the exit session. However, if the exit session raises important, unresolved questions, the team may need to reconvene to reconsider some aspect of its report or recommendation. If necessary, it should take time to clarify its position or make sure of its facts and, in extremely difficult cases, it may be necessary for the team to extend its stay to gather and assess the additional information needed.

8 The Team Report and Recommendation

AUDIENCES FOR THE TEAM REPORT

The Team Report is intended for a variety of audiences. The most obvious are: the Executive Officer, the governing board, and others at the institution, the Commission staff, the Accreditation Review Council members who will take part in the review process, the Commissioners, and the members of subsequent Evaluation Teams.

In most Team Reports balance is important, but in certain situations Evaluation Teams might choose to focus the report more clearly toward one audience than another. If the team consciously chooses such a focus, it would be wise in the introduction to identify the audience and the reason for its choice. This clarifying information is critical for those persons involved in the Commission review processes who must determine whether the team's recommendations are adequately supported and for the Commissioners who must take final action.

WRITING RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE TEAM REPORT

In writing the Team Report, the Team Chair draws heavily on the comments, ideas, and rough drafts of the other team members. Therefore, it is important that members of the team

- ◊ understand the nature of the Team Report and provide information useful to its writing,
- ◊ submit written contributions to the Team Chair either at the end of the visit or within a week after it,
- ◊ read the draft report with care and report to the Team Chair both editing and corrections that should be considered before the final report is written and submitted to the Commission.

Because the Team Chair needs to provide a report that is consistent with and supportive of the team's recommendation, the draft report will be more than a cut-and-paste amalgamation of team members' drafts. Instead of expecting to see in that report every word provided to the Chair, a team member should review the document for its accuracy and coherence.

The Team Chair composes the Team Report, and is responsible for writing a clear, concise, well-organized, and coherent document that will stand up under the careful scrutiny of a wide variety of readers.

In writing the report, the Team Chair should honestly reflect the views of the Evaluation Team, and indicate (without identifying individuals) any significant disagreements within it; should include all of the major points made in the team's oral report at the exit session; and should compose a report that conveys the team's recommendation and its rationale for each aspect of that recommendation.

STRUCTURE OF THE TEAM REPORT

Every Team Report is different because no two institutions are the same. But since each evaluation is conducted to examine an institution for the same accrediting purposes and in relation to a common set of Criteria, every Team Report must include the following sections.

- ◊ Section I, an introduction, in which the team reviews certain matters of information;

- ◇ Section II, in which the team in its role as evaluator clearly measures the institution against the General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for Accreditation or the Candidacy Program and provides a summary of institutional strengths and concerns;
- ◇ Section III, in which the team in its consultant role offers advice and suggestions to the institution;
- ◇ Section IV, in which the team provides its formal recommendation and the rationale for that recommendation.

☐ Section I: The Introduction

A clear introduction provides the reader a context within which to read what follows. This introduction provides certain matters of information:

- ◇ the organization of the report;
- ◇ the accreditation history of the institution;
- ◇ the structure and scope of this evaluation visit; and
- ◇ any comments about the audience of the report.

The introduction should also contain a paragraph that evaluates the usefulness of the institutional Self-Study Report. The team's assessment of the Self-Study Report can be very useful to others in the Commission's review processes, to subsequent Self-Study Coordinators at the institution, and to Commission staff in the identification of good examples of Self-Study Reports.

It is important that the team briefly review how the evaluation visit was conducted (i.e., people interviewed, documents reviewed, etc.). This need not be an exhaustive list of names or offices, but should give solid evidence that the review was appropriately complete.

The introduction should define the scope of the evaluation visit as stated by the last official action of the Commission and as specified on the Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet that the team received before the visit. The introduction should confirm that the scope was not changed or explain how it was changed.

Some examples:

- ◊ *"This is the report of a comprehensive evaluation for continued accreditation at the master's degree-granting level that was conducted for the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education on (dates of the visit). During the visit the institution asked that its accreditation be extended to include a new program at a higher degree level."*
- ◊ *"This is a report of a focused visit held at the request of the institution to extend accreditation to include a new branch campus."*

☐ Section II: Evaluation for Affiliation

Every Team Report for candidacy or accreditation must contain an explicit evaluation of whether the institution fulfills the criteria for the status sought. There is no prescribed format for the organization of this part of the report. Because this section of the report is crucial to the Commission's decision-making processes after the evaluation visit, it must clearly and thoroughly justify the team's recommendation.

- **The General Institutional Requirements (GIRs).** The institution's Self-Study Report should document how the institution meets the GIRs. If the Evaluation Team finds that meeting the GIRs is sufficiently well-documented in the Self-Study Report, it need only note that conclusion in the Team Report, and refer to the section(s) of the Self-Study Report where details can be found. If, however, the team finds deficiencies with respect to one or more of the GIRs, it must discuss these in the Team Report and reflect its findings in the team recommendation. **Explicit commentary of each of the GIRs is required in Team Reports involving evaluations for initial and continued candidacy and initial accreditation.**

- **The Criteria for Accreditation.** Chapter 4 suggests the areas the team needs to examine to ensure that an institution's patterns of evidence sufficiently support its claim that it fulfills the Criteria. In documenting in the Team Report that an institution does or does not satisfy the Criteria for Accreditation, the team does not have to repeat all of the information that is contained in the institution's Self-Study Report, catalogs, and other materials. In some cases, the team will need to provide extended discussion and documentation to support its conclusions; in others, it will be able to refer readers to other institutional documents and briefly summarize what can be found there. In other words, the Team Report need not be a totally self-contained document, but it must summarize clearly the evidence supporting the team's judgments about every part of the Criteria.

- **The Candidacy Program.** Chapter 13 outlines the need for the team to examine both the institution's current patterns of evidence and its plans for strengthening those patterns. In documenting in the Team Report that an institution fulfills the requirements of the Candidacy Program, the team should follow the same advice provided above on the Criteria for Accreditation.

- **Strengths and Concerns.** The team should attempt to summarize the most salient, distinguishing strengths and concerns. This section should not provide new information but should summarize information provided elsewhere in the team's evaluative narrative. "Strengths" are emphasized both to commend the institution for them and to encourage it to maintain them. "Concerns" are emphasized to indicate those areas that require attention either immediately or in the future. This is not the place for a long, exhaustive list of every good point and every problem the team discovered. Such information is not useful to the institution in establishing priorities for action.

  It is important that there be consistency between the summary of strengths and concerns and the team recommendation. The institution will report on its progress in addressing concerns identified in its next Self-Study Report.

☐ Section III: Observations and Suggestions for Institutional Improvement

Because the Commission's mission is also to encourage institutional improvement, Evaluation Teams are asked to offer suggestions to institutions as well as to evaluate them. A section devoted to such observations and suggestions is an essential part of the Team Report.

- ◊ Suggestions should be clearly differentiated from the team's evaluation of the institution in relation to the Criteria.

- ◊ The report should state explicitly that the section is **advisory** and that making any changes or improvements mentioned is not a requirement of the institution's candidacy or accreditation.

- ◊ Concerns that affect the institution's ability to fulfill the General Institutional Requirements or the Criteria belong in Section II. Suggested ways to resolve those and other unrelated concerns belong in Section III.

As experienced educators, team members can often offer valuable counsel to an institution. As outsiders they can sometimes bring an objective perspective to bear on a difficulty that the institution has not been able to

clarify for itself. Teams are encouraged to offer this counsel and perspective whenever they can and to keep this section of the Team Report in mind during their meetings on campus.

A team's suggestions vary with the institution it visits and with the type of comprehensive evaluation it has been asked to conduct. Few fixed rules can be provided by the Commission for what should be included in this section. However, the Commission does recommend the following guidelines.

- ◇ Raise issues directly. For example:

  "The organizational structure of the college does not provide line officers with enough decision-making authority."

- ◇ Make clear suggestions for change. For example:

  "We suggest that the college's organizational plan place explicit responsibility for day-to-day decisions with the line officers, and that the president should review the effects of those decisions each month."

- ◇ Observations and suggestions should not identify personalities within the institution, even when the observations are laudatory. For example, it would be inappropriate to say:

  "The president's administrative style is interesting and unconventional." or *"The Dean of Students is doing an excellent job."*

- ◇ Teams should be wary of characterizing the way various persons get along with each other. The short duration of the visit does not really allow the team to arrive at a thorough knowledge of the activities of most individuals within the institution, so it is better to relate observations and suggestions to organizational elements within the institution. For example, it would be better to say:

  "There appears to be a good rapport between student leaders and the office of the Dean of Students."

  instead of:

  "The Dean of Students and the President of the Student Body talk freely and frequently with one another."

- ◇ Suggest, rather that prescribe, specific solutions to problems. Specific prescriptions are the types of advice most often confused by institutions and readers with accreditation requirements. For example, avoid language such as:

  "The student personnel office is overworked, and an Associate Dean of Students must be appointed immediately."

- ◇ Do not direct the institution to meet standards or guidelines of other agencies. For example, do not suggest that:

  "the College should seek NCATE accreditation."

  However, it is appropriate to point out that the lack of specialized accreditation may handicap graduates.

A note about special emphases visits. If an institution chooses to build its self-study around special emphases, the team should note that in the introduction to the Team Report and speak directly to those topics in the body of the Team Report. In such cases, the observations and suggestions section of the Team Report

may be more pointed and specific than normal, for the institution, in choosing to emphasize special topics, has also sought from the team a response to and analysis of what was accomplished. Usually it is still important that the Team Report clearly distinguishes between the bases for the accrediting recommendation and the consulting advice sought by the institution. Special emphases visits are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

☐ Section IV: The Team Recommendation and Rationale

The final section of the Team Report should have three related parts: a brief, standard recommendation sentence; a rationale; and a Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status. This section of the report should begin on a new page to facilitate use in later stages of the evaluation process.

- **The Recommendation Sentence.** The recommendation sentence begins the final section of the Team Report. The recommendation sentence for a comprehensive evaluation should follow one of two models.

  A positive recommendation sentence should read:

  > *"The team's recommendations for action, including its recommendation to (grant/continue) the (candidacy/accreditation) of College X, are shown on the attached Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status. The team's reasons for its recommendations are:"*

  A negative recommendation sentence should read:

  > *"The team recommends that the (candidacy/accreditation) of College X be (denied/withdrawn) for the following reasons:"*

- **The Rationale.** The recommendation sentence is to be followed by a section in which the Evaluation Team clearly states its reasons its judgments and its specific recommendations. Because some of the Commission's subsequent decision-making processes rely heavily on this portion of the Team Report, it is important that the rationale, even at the risk of repeating previous portions of the report, summarizes the team's reasons for all components of its recommendation. The rationale should provide clear, well-supported reasons for any focused evaluations or reports that are called for as well as the recommended timing of the next comprehensive evaluation. It is essential that the tone and content of this section be consistent with the tone and content of the overall report and that the team's recommendation be substantiated as part of the analysis developed in Section II of the report. Usually the team can provide an adequate rationale for its recommendation in two or three pages.

- **Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status (SAS) and the SISA.** The SAS Worksheet summarizes the team's recommendation. It plays a critical role in the evaluation process, conveying team and, in some cases Review Committee, recommendations to the Commission for final action. Because of the critical nature of the Worksheet, it is important that the Team Chair consult with the staff liaison to ensure that the wording is clear for the processes that follow and for others who may view it in the future. Detailed information on the sections of the SAS is provided in Chapter 2. The team will not include in its report any recommendations about the SISA, but it should notify the Commission staff if corrections to the SISA are needed.

PREPARING AND SUBMITTING THE TEAM REPORT

☐ The Draft Team Report

After receiving materials from the team, the Team Chair completes a draft of the report and distributes it to the team, the institution and the Commission staff liaison. To assure that the decision-making schedule of the

Commission is maintained, the draft should be completed and distributed within one month of the evaluation visit.

- **The format of the Team Report.** The Team Report should follow these format guidelines:

  - ◇ The report should be typed or laser printed, double-spaced, single-sided, on 8 ½ x 11 paper. (Use only printers that provide letter quality print that will produce clear, readable photocopies.)

  - ◇ The title page follows the format of the sample shown. Clearly place these words on the title page of the draft:

    "Draft for correction of errors of fact only– for internal distribution at the discretion of the Executive Officer."

  - ◇ A Table of Contents is useful.

  - ◇ Place the name of the institution on the top left of each page.

  - ◇ Number each page at the top right or on the bottom.

  - ◇ Allow at least 1" left-hand margins (wide enough to allow the report to be placed in a binder).

REPORT OF A VISIT

TO

JOHN DEWEY COLLEGE

Chicago, Illinois

October 17-19, 1994

for the

Commission of Institutions of Higher Education

of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

Willard Gibbs, Professor of Physics, Oppenheimer University, Los Alamos NM 87105

Elizabeth Peabody, President, Curti College, Madison WI 53703

Charles S. Pierce, Chairperson of the Humanities Division, Fitzgerald College, St. Paul MN 55422

Emma Willard, Dean of the College of Education, Hutchins University, Aspen CO 80303 (Chairperson)

☐ Response to the Draft Team Report

In the letter that transmits the draft report, the Team Chair should establish firm deadlines for response from the Executive Officer of the institution, the members of the team, and the Commission staff member who has coordinated the evaluation visit. **Unless notified by any of these parties, the Chair should assume when the deadline arrives that the final report can be produced and submitted to the Commission.**

☐ The Final Team Report

If the comments from the Executive Officer, the team members, and the Commission staff suggest that substantive changes in the draft may be required, the Team Chair may need to confer by telephone with the members of the team before preparing the final version. When the final report is completed, the Team Chair sends it to the Commission staff liaison. **The final Team Report is due in the office of the Commission no later than eight weeks after the evaluation visit.**

The final Team Report is the original of the final report with the SAS Worksheet attached. The Commission staff will retype the SAS Worksheet recommendations for the final report. Because Commission processes often require multiple copies, the clear original must be in the Commission files.

The Commission office duplicates the final report and mails four copies of it to the Executive Officer and one copy to each member of the team. Additional copies are prepared for later distribution by the Commission during the review processes.

9 Review Processes and Commission Action

REVIEW PROCESSES LEADING TO COMMISSION ACTION

The evaluation process includes three steps to ensure the appropriateness of the final action. The first step is the evaluation of the institution by an Evaluation Team; the second step is the review of the documents relating to the evaluation visit through one of two review processes, the Readers' Panel or the Review Committee; the third step is final review and action by the members of the Commission. In most evaluations, the institution chooses the review process it prefers in its official response to the Team Report.

☐ Institutional Response to the Team Report

After reviewing the Team Report, including the Evaluation Team's recommendation, the Executive Officer of the institution sends a formal written response to the Commission. The Institutional Response

- ◇ provides the institution's commentary on the findings of the team and becomes an integral part of the subsequent review processes, including the next evaluation.
- ◇ becomes part of the official record of the evaluation.
- ◇ identifies the institution's choice of review process for evaluations for continued candidacy, continued accreditation, and focused visits.

The institution sends its response to the Commission and the members of the team **within two weeks of receipt of the final Team Report.** The institution should notify its Commission staff liaison if it encounters any delay in submitting the response. However, **the Commission will not postpone its regularly scheduled processes and will move forward with an appropriate process if the institution fails to submit a response within a reasonable period of time.** The Institutional Response is sent by the institution to all members of the Readers' Panel and/or Review Committee, as appropriate.

☐ Choosing the Appropriate Review Process

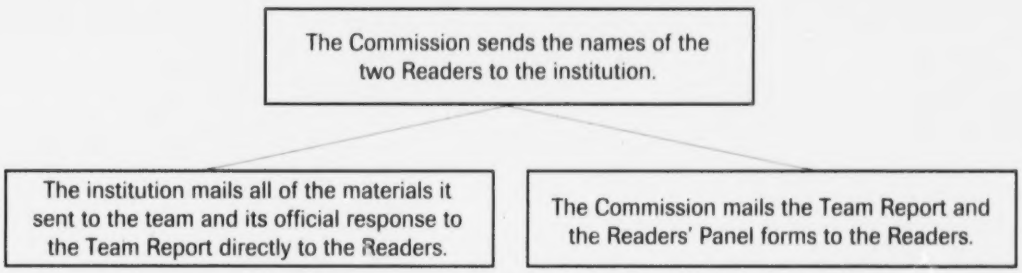
The Commission has established two processes for review of institutional evaluations: the Readers' Panel process and the Review Committee process.

- **Institutions required to be reviewed by a Review Committee.** Institutions undergoing evaluation for initial candidacy or initial accreditation and institutions whose team recommendations include the addition or removal of Probation or withdrawal of affiliation, must be reviewed by a Review Committee. Review Committees also consider team recommendations found not acceptable to a particular institution and team recommendations forwarded by the Readers' Panel Process or by the Commission.
- **Institutions eligible to choose the type of review process.** Institutions undergoing evaluation for continued candidacy or continued accreditation as well as those undergoing focused evaluation are eligible to choose the process they prefer.
  - ◇ If the institution determines that it is in essential agreement with the team's recommendation, then requesting review by a Readers' Panel is appropriate.
  - ◇ If the institution disagrees with the team recommendation, it should ask to be reviewed by a Review Committee. In considering whether to choose the Review Committee process, the

institution should understand that Review Committees cannot alter Team Reports; they can recommend altering the team recommendation. Final judgment of whether the team recommendation should be sustained or modified rests with the Commission. The institution also should be aware that the Review Committee is not limited to the area that the institution wants to challenge. It can make recommendations about any aspect of the SAS that it believes appropriate.

☐ The Readers' Panel Process

The institution selects the Readers' Panel Process when it submits its Institutional Response to the Team Report.


The Commission sends the names of the two Readers to the institution.
The institution mails all of the materials it sent to the team and its official response to the Team Report directly to the Readers.
The Commission mails the Team Report and the Readers' Panel forms to the Readers.

A Readers' Panel consists of two members of the Accreditation Review Council (see Chapter 6). Readers independently study the documents provided by the institution and the Commission. Each Reader completes a Readers' Panel Report Form and returns it to the Commission office. Readers may also provide external comments to identify for staff and the Commission issues in accreditation that need their examination.

The Readers' Panel may make one of the following recommendations.

- ◇ **that the recommendation be forwarded to the Commission without modification.** The Readers' Panel makes this recommendation if both Readers find that the team's recommendation is appropriate as presented in the Team Report. The institution and the Team Chair are informed of the Readers' recommendation.

- ◇ **that the recommendation be forwarded with minor modifications.** Readers may recommend specific **minor** modifications that they believe will strengthen the team's recommendation. In making these recommendations, Readers indicate on the Readers' Panel Report Form the nature of and rationale for each suggested modification, keeping in mind that their comments will form the basis for discussion by a Review Committee if the institution refuses to accept the suggested modifications. If one or both Readers make such recommendations, a conference call is scheduled to discuss the modifications. (This option is not intended to promote back-and-forth negotiation between Readers and institution; under no circumstances will the Readers communicate with either the team or the institution.)

  - ○ If the Readers cannot agree on proposed modifications, the team's original recommendation is forwarded to the Commission. The institution and the Team Chair are informed of the Readers' recommendation.

  - ○ If both Readers agree on revised language, the Commission staff liaison formally proposes the modification(s) to the institution. If the institution concurs with the modification(s), the institution and Team Chair are informed of the Readers' recommendations, and the revised recommendation is forwarded to the Commission.

However, if the institution does not agree with the Readers' proposed modifications to the team recommendation, then the Readers' forms, and staff summary of Reader recommended change(s) are forwarded to the next regularly-scheduled Review Committee. The institution and Team Chair are informed and invited to appear before the Review Committee.

◇ **that the recommendation be forwarded to a Review Committee for further consideration.** The Readers' Panel makes this recommendation if it finds that review by a Review Committee is likely to lead to alteration of the team's recommendation. The Readers identify on the Reader form any aspects of the team's recommendation that deserve special attention by the Review Committee, specifying in detail the related issues that should be explored further. The institution and Team Chair are informed and invited to appear before the next regularly scheduled Review Committee.

☐ The Review Committee Process

Review Committees are comprised of at least seven Consultant-Evaluators, most of whom are current Accreditation Review Council members. Review Committee members are appointed in accordance with the same general guidelines on conflict of interest that govern appointment of team members. The Commission holds at least two Review Committee meetings each year at which several Committees meet simultaneously. Each of these individual Committees is likely to review three or more institutions in separate sessions.

◇ The institution is informed of the date of the next Review Committee in the letter with the Team Report, in the letter transmitting the Readers' Panel recommendation, or in the action letter of the Commission.

◇ Several weeks before the meeting, the Commission sends to the institution the names of the members of the Review Committee.

◇ **Immediately upon receipt of this information, the institution sends** to the members of the Review Committee **all of the materials** it sent to the team together with its official response to the Team Report and, when appropriate, its response to the Readers' Panel or the Commission. Materials should be sent **by first class or express mail** to ensure receipt by Review Committee members in time to allow adequate preparation for the meeting.

◇ At the same time that it sends the Review Committee roster and instructions to the institution, the Commission also sends to the members of the Review Committee the Team Report and, when appropriate, the Readers' Panel forms or Commission rationale for seeking a Review Committee.

The Team Chair and the Executive Officer of the institution appear before the Committee to discuss the institution's materials, the evaluation visit, and the Team Report and recommendation. (In unusual situations, the Evaluation Team may be represented by a member other than the Chair; the institution also may be represented by a person other than the Executive Officer). The Executive Officer may choose to be accompanied by other people representing the institution (e.g., Chief Academic Officer, Chair of the Board, Chair of a specific Department, Student Affairs Officer) to whom the EO can refer specific questions.

The institution and the Team Chair have an opportunity to make brief oral presentations and then to answer the questions of the Review Committee members. **Audio-visual presentations are not permitted, nor may the institution provide extra written materials at the meeting.**

The Review Committee considers the information it has gained in closed session and crafts a recommendation and rationale that usually is shared with the institution and the Team Chair at the end of the meeting.

The Review Committee forwards a recommendation to the Commission; that recommendation may be the one made by the team, a minor modification of that recommendation, or a recommendation significantly different from it. The Review Committee may also provide external comments to identify for staff and the Commission issues in accreditation that need their examination.

☐ Institution and Team Response to the Review Committee Recommendations

The Commission office forwards to the institution and to the Team Chair the formal Review Committee recommendation. Both are invited either to indicate support of the recommendation or to file a written response that describes their objections to the recommendation, providing, if desired, extra written evidence to support the grounds on which the objections rest. All responses become part of the record of the evaluation and are provided to the Commission for its consideration in taking the final action.

COMMISSION ACTION

The Commission uses a variety of methods to review the recommendations that come before it. Most team recommendations that receive approval by the Readers' Process are reviewed by the Commission's Committee on Institutional Actions; all Evaluation Team and Review Committee recommendations concerning initial candidacy, initial accreditation, Probation, or withdrawal of status are reviewed by the Commission sitting as a Committee of the Whole. Individual Commissioners may be asked to provide written analyses to assist the Commission in considering the issues in a particular case. All Commissioners vote on all institutional actions whether the actions are taken at a scheduled meeting, through teleconference, or through mail review and balloting.

Because the Commission has defined with precision certain parameters within which it must make its decisions, its complete policy is important:

> The Commission may accept, modify, or reject a recommendation from an Evaluation Team or a Review Committee when those recommendations on the same institution differ substantially. The Commission, for clearly specified reasons, may refer to a Review Committee for reconsideration a recommendation from an Evaluation Team that was unchanged by a Review Committee.
>
> The Commission may propose to modify or reject a recommendation concerning initial candidacy, initial accreditation, and withdrawal of affiliation even when the Evaluation Team and Review Committee concur in that recommendation. The Commissioners' proposed action together with the clearly specified reasons for it are provided by the Executive Director to the institution, the Team Chair and, when appropriate, the Chair of the Review Committee. These parties are asked to respond within 30 days. No later than 30 days after the deadline for responses, the Commissioners review the responses and take action, either at a regularly scheduled meeting or at a special meeting (including a meeting conducted by teleconference).
>
> A letter from the Executive Director of the Commission, accompanied by a revised Statement of Affiliation Status, to the Executive Officer provides formal notification to the institution of the Commission's action. If the Commission acts to invoke Probation or to deny or withdraw accreditation or candidacy, the formal notification sets forth the Commission's reasons for the action.

10 The Evaluation Process: Charts, Timelines, Samples

An Overview of the Evaluation Process

The Commission's process of evaluation for both initial and continued candidacy or accreditation determines whether an institution meets the General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for Accreditation or Candidacy. The Commission makes this determination through an evaluation that is **comprehensive** in scope. In some cases, evaluations for continued accreditation may include special emphases but, in general, comprehensive evaluations examine functions and operations of the whole institution in light of the appropriate Criteria. They result in recommendations and Commission actions concerning:

- ◇ whether an institution should be granted initial or continued candidacy or accreditation;
- ◇ whether candidacy or accreditation should be accompanied by any stipulations (e.g., that the institution's accreditation or candidacy be limited to offering only certain degrees);
- ◇ whether any reports should be filed and/or focused evaluations should be conducted before the next comprehensive evaluation; and
- ◇ when the next comprehensive evaluation should be conducted.

☐ Initiating the Evaluation Process

Institutions currently affiliated with the Commission are scheduled for evaluation by previous Commission action. Approximately two years before that scheduled evaluation, the Commission staff liaison sends the Executive Officer a reminder letter about the forthcoming evaluation visit. In response, the Executive Officer:

- ◇ confirms or requests changes in the Statement of Affiliation Status (SAS);
- ◇ names the institution's Self-Study Coordinator;
- ◇ provides three possible dates for the evaluation visit.

At this time, the institution begins to develop for itself and the Commission a plan for its self-study process that briefly describes the study's design, strategies, and timetable.

One year before the evaluation visit, the institution receives another letter of reminder. In response, the Executive Officer confirms the time and purpose of the scheduled visit and indicates the competencies the institution would like to see represented on the Evaluation Team. Focused evaluations called for by previous Commission actions follow this same procedure.

Paper at this stage of the process: Two-and one-year reminder letters from the Commission, forms for responses from institutions, and SAS. Basic Institutional Data Forms are sent with one-year reminder letters.

☐ The Annual Meeting

One- and two-year reminder letters also encourage the institution to send representatives to the Commission's Annual Meeting held in Chicago in early spring. Many sessions provide guidance about various elements of

the self-study and accreditation processes, an opportunity to review Commission policies and procedures and to examine sample self-studies, and a chance to exchange information and ideas with people from other institutions who are or have recently been engaged in self-study. Special Workshops for Self-Study Coordinators are offered in two tracks, one for those just beginning the self-study process and one for those who are at the stage of writing the Self-Study Report and preparing for the team visit.

Attendance is voluntary. The Annual Meeting is open to all persons interested in self-study and institutional improvement; it is particularly useful for Self-Study Coordinators, Steering Committee members, Executive Officers, and trustees of institutions scheduled for evaluations in the **next two-three years.** Program information and registration materials are widely distributed to member institutions, Consultant-Evaluators, and others in late fall.

Paper at this stage of the process: Registration packets for the Annual Meeting sent in early December.

☐ Commission Staff Assistance

The Commission staff liaison reviews the institution's self-study plan, provides counsel about ways to integrate the self-study process for Commission evaluation with an institution's ongoing evaluation and planning programs, develops a proposed team for the evaluation visit, and reviews the final draft of the institution's Self-Study Report. It should be clearly understood, however, that staff *do not* make candidacy or accreditation decisions or recommendations.

☐ The Self-Study Process

The process of institutional self-study is the foundation of the Commission's comprehensive evaluations for initial and continued candidacy and accreditation. The institution plans and undertakes a self-study process to determine how well it meets the Criteria and to identify what it can do to improve or enhance its programs and operations. The results of this self-study are summarized in a Self-Study Report. The completed Self-Study Report constitutes the institution's formal application for initial or continued candidacy or accreditation and forms the basis for the Commission's evaluation. When it receives the two-year reminder of a forthcoming comprehensive evaluation—if not before—the institution should begin to organize its self-study process.

Paper at this stage of the process: Self-study plan and timetable.

☐ Choosing an Evaluation Team

While the institution is gathering, evaluating, and beginning to organize its information into a formal Self-Study Report, the Commission staff liaison is developing a proposed team from the Commission's corps of Consultant-Evaluators (C-Es). Several months before the visit is to take place, the staff liaison submits the names of the proposed team members to the Executive Officer of the institution for comment. Following this institutional review, the Commission formally invites the team members to serve and formally notifies the institution when all team members have accepted the assignment.

Paper at this stage in the process: Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet, Professional Data Forms of C-Es.

☐ Materials for the Evaluation

The institution sends the final Self-Study Report, completed Basic Institutional Data forms, the latest institutional catalog(s), and faculty and student handbooks to the Commission and to all team members. The Commission sends to the team relevant materials from its files.

Paper at this stage in the process: Institutional materials–Self-Study Report, Basic Institutional Data forms, institutional catalogs, faculty and student handbooks. Commission materials–Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status, Record of Status and Scope, Evaluation Visits Summary Sheet, documents from the institution's file in the Commission office.

☐ Evaluation Fee

The Commission bills the institution for the evaluation according to its current Evaluation Fee Schedule. The institution must pay the evaluation fee at least one month before the evaluation visit. In some cases, the visit may be billed on the basis of actual cost plus a flat fee for administrative costs. In those cases, the Commission may require a deposit before the visit.

Paper at this stage in the process: Invoice for the evaluation visit.

☐ The Evaluation Visit

The team conducts the evaluation visit, validating the institution's self-assessment, gathering information about the institution, and summarizing its findings in a written Team Report. Team members usually arrive the evening before the visit officially begins to review their strategies for the evaluation. During the visit, team members may interview members of the administration, the Board, the state coordinating or governing agency, the faculty, the student body, and the community. Before leaving the campus, the team meets with the Executive Officer and others invited by the Executive Officer to summarize its findings and outline its perceptions of institutional strengths and concerns. During this **exit session** the Team Chair also informs the institution of the accrediting recommendation and the rationale for that recommendation.

Paper at this stage in the process: Specific materials set aside for the team in a room on campus.

☐ The Team Report

The Team Report assesses whether the institution satisfies the General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria. Moreover, the Team Report contains a section on strengths and concerns as well as advice and suggestions for institutional improvement. It concludes with a formal recommendation for accreditation action and the rationale for that recommendation.

The Team Report process involves two stages: the draft report and the final report. In responding to the draft, the institution communicates directly with the Team Chair to correct factual errors. Team members and Commission staff also receive and respond to the draft report. The Team Chair submits the final report to the Commission. The Commission is responsible for distributing the Team Report to the institution and the team.

Paper at this stage in the process: draft Team Report; institutional, team, and Commission staff comments on Draft Team Report; Final Team Report.

☐ The Institutional Response

The Executive Officer makes a formal written response to the Team Report. This response becomes part of the official record of the evaluation, is considered during the Commission's review process, and is made available to the next team that visits the institution. The institution sends its response to the Commission and sends copies **to each team member.** It reserves additional copies for distribution to members of the review process.

Paper at this stage in the process: Institutional Response to the Team Report.

The Review Processes

The Commission has established two processes for the review of institutional evaluations: the **Readers' Panel** and the **Review Committee.** Institutions undergoing evaluations for continued candidacy, continued accreditation, or focused evaluations choose the process they prefer. If there is no substantial disagreement between the institution and the team concerning the team recommendations, the institution typically chooses the Readers' Panel; if there is, it asks to be considered by a Review Committee. Review Committee consideration is required if the evaluation is for either initial candidacy or initial accreditation, or if the team recommends imposing or removing probation.

Paper at this stage in the process: Self-study materials and institutional responses sent by the institution; Team Report sent by the Commission. Letter from the Commission notifying the institution and team of the review process recommendation.

Response to Review Committee Recommendation

If the institution was considered by a Review Committee, the Commission requests the Executive Officer to respond in writing to the Review Committee's recommendation before the Commission acts on the recommendation. As part of its response, the institution may include any additional materials it thinks will be relevant to the Commission's decision. The Team Chair also is invited to respond to the Review Committee recommendation. These responses also become a part of the official record and are shared with the next Evaluation Team.

Paper at this stage in the process: Institutional and Team Chair responses to the Review Committee Recommendation.

Commission Action

The Commission holds three meetings a year at which it makes decisions about the affiliation status of institutions. Actions may also be taken between meetings through mail ballots, conference calls, or other forms of telecommunciation. The Commissioners take all final Commission action. Before taking action, the Commissioners review all recommendations from Commission staff, from Evaluation Teams, from Evaluators' Panels, from Readers' Panels, and from Review Committees.

A letter from the Executive Director of the Commission to the Executive Officer provides formal notification to the institution of the Commission's action. The letter is accompanied by a copy of the institution's Record of Status and Scope, which includes a revised Statement of Affiliation Status section. If the Commission acts to invoke probation or to deny or withdraw accreditation or candidacy, the formal notification sets forth the Commission's reasons for the action.

Paper at this stage in the process: Commission action letter with new Record of Status and Scope.

The Appeals Process

The Constitution of the North Central Association provides for appeal of Commission actions that deny or withdraw accreditation or candidacy. Notice of intent to appeal must be adopted by the institution's governing board and be filed by the institution with the Secretary of the Association not later than thirty days following the date of the Commission's action.

Paper at this stage in the process: Institutional and Commission appeal documents.

A Sample Timeline for the Evaluation Process

It usually takes at least four full semesters for an institution to plan, execute, and report a comprehensive Self-Study. When it receives the Commission's two-year reminder of a forthcoming comprehensive evaluation—if not before—the institution should begin to organize its self-study process. The timeline below is a sample, provided to help institutions understand Commission expectations and to prepare for self-study and evaluation. The evaluation process is not complete until Commission action has been taken.

Months before the Visit	Month (if known)	By	Task
24-32 months	September	Commission	• sends two-year reminder letter to institution notifying it of the scheduled evaluation
	Sep-Oct	Institution	• initiates planning the self-study process
22-30 months	November	Institution	• notifies Commission of its Self-Study Coordinator, its preferred dates for the visit, and any proposed changes in its Statement of Affiliation Status • appoints Self-Study Steering Committee
21-29 months	December	Commission	• sends Annual Meeting information and registration packets to institutions
		Institution	• Self-Study Steering Committee develops a self-study plan and submits it to Commission staff for review • Steering Committee organizes and selects principal subcommittees
19-25 months	March/April	Institution	• participates in the Self-Study Coordinators Workshops and other programs at the NCA Annual Meeting
18-24 months	March/April	Institution	• Sub-committees gather data, interview, analyze, and develop draft reports for submission to the Steering Committee
11-18 months	November	Commission	• sends one-year reminder letter to institution, confirms dates of visit, provides Basic Institutional Data Forms
10-17 months	December	Commission	• sends Annual Meeting information and registration packets to institutions
	Dec-Jan	Institution	• sends Commission information on team competencies
9-16 months	January	Commission	• confirms date of visit and other institutional information
7-14 months	March/April	Institution	• participates in the Self-Study Coordinators Workshops and other programs at the NCA Annual Meeting

Months before the Visit	Month (if known)	By	Task
10 months		Institution	• Steering Committee analyzes information prepared, completes studies, prepares rough draft of Self-Study Report
7-8 months		Institution	• Steering Committee circulates and receives reactions to draft report
6 months		Institution	• Editor compiles final Self-Study Report
5-12 months	May	Commission	• sends a list of proposed team members and an Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet to institution
5-11 months	May/June	Institution	• sends comments on proposed team members to the Commission
4-11 months	June-July	Commission	• invites team
4-8 months	July-Oct	Commission	• notifies institution and team that team is complete (in general, fall teams are completed by August 1, spring teams are completed by October 15)
3-6 months		Team	• Team chair contacts institution to make arrangements for evaluation visit
3 months		Institution	• completes duplication of Self-Study Report, completes BIDs, etc. • prepares for team visit
1-1.5 months		Institution	• sends one complete set of evaluation materials to each member of the evaluation team and to the Commission staff liaison
		Commission	• sends to team and institution materials for the visit including the Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status
0 months		All	• **The evaluation visit takes place**
Months after the Visit	**Month (if known)**	**By**	**Task**
1 month		Team	• Team chair completes draft of Team Report and circulates it to the institution, the team members, and the Commission staff liaison for comments and corrections
		All	• Institution, team members, and Commission staff liaison respond to draft Team Report
1.5 months		Team	• Team chair completes final Team Report and submits it to the Commission

Months after the Visit	Month (if known)	By	Task
2 months		Commission	• duplicates Team Report and sends copies to the institution and the team
2.5 months	2 weeks after receipt of final report	Institution	• sends response to Team Report to Commission and team and (if it has a choice) chooses the review process it prefers
2-5 months			Review Process-Readers' Panel:
	1-2 weeks after response filed	Commission	• sends names of readers to institution; sends Team Report to each Reader
	on receipt of letter from Commission	Institution	• sends Self-Study Report, BIDs, institutional catalogs, faculty and student handbooks, and response to Team Report to each Reader
	approx. 4-6 weeks later	Commission	• notifies institution and team of Reader recommendations
			Review Process-Review Committee:
	4-5 weeks before the meeting	Commission	• sends Review Committee schedule and names of Committee members to institution and Team Chair and sends Team Report to Review Committee members
	3-4 weeks before the meeting	Institution	• sends each Review Committee member Self-Study Report, BIDs, institutional response, and any other information it believes is relevant
	typically Jan or June	All	• Institution and team representatives meet with the Review Committee
	1 week after mtg	Commission	• notifies institution and Team Chair of Review Committee recommendations and invites their response
	2 weeks after mtg	Institution/ Team Chair	• Respond to Review Committee Recommendation
3-8 months	Feb, Aug, Nov	Commission	• Commission action
	1 week after mtg	Commission	• Executive Director sends action letter to Executive Officer of institution; sends copies to each Evaluation Team member
		Institution	• begins to implement plan for following up on recommendations and issues identified in the Self-Study Report and the Team Report

Materials for the Evaluation Process

Institutional Materials

A. Materials prepared by the institution for distribution during a comprehensive evaluation

- the appropriate Self-Study Report;
- completed Basic Institutional Data forms (sent by the Commission a year before the visit);
- the latest institutional catalog(s); and
- faculty and student handbooks.

Distribution of these materials by the institution for the evaluation process. Six to eight weeks prior to the visit, the institution sends

- one set to the Commission staff liaison
- one set to each member of the Evaluation Team

Following the visit, the institution sends the materials listed above, together with its Institutional Response to the Team Report, to each member of the appropriate review process. The Commission sends the names and addresses of the reviewers to the institution after the final Team Report and Institutional Response have been received. The institution will need

- two sets for a Readers' Panel
- up to twelve sets for a Review Committee

The institution should produce additional sets of materials for its own use.

B. Materials available to the Team during the visit in a Resource Room established by the institution

- minutes of major institutional committees, including Self-Study Committee
- reports referenced in the Self-Study Report or used by working committees
- policies and procedures related to curriculum adoption, review, and evaluation
- policies on learning resources, including libraries, and formal agreements for the shared use of learning resources
- policies on interaction with other academic institutions and programs
- policies for allocation and use of computer resources
- budgets and expenditure reports for units, programs, and the institution as a whole, and the institutional audits at least for the last five years
- physical facilities master plan
- maintenance plans
- catalogs, bulletins, viewbooks, and other institutional promotional literature
- academic admission, good standing, and completion policies
- policies related to the employment, orientation, supervision, and evaluation of full-time faculty, part-time faculty, and teaching assistants
- faculty, student, and staff handbooks
- bylaws of faculty and staff assemblies or other representative bodies
- governance documents: charter, bylaws, policies, membership, minutes, reports
- a complete roster of all faculty members (full- and part-time) and their teaching assignments during the current academic term
- formal agreements for all consortia or contractual relationships
- student service policies (residence, governance, health, financial aid, student records, and the refund policy)
- board rosters, charters, and bylaws, including those of separately incorporated entities (e.g., research, development, foundation, alumni associations, or athletic corporations)
- reports from other agencies or accrediting bodies

Commission Materials

Materials distributed by the Commission to the institution and each evaluation team member

- the Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet;
- the institution's Record of Status and Scope, which includes the Statement of Affiliation Status and the Statement of Institutional Scope and Activities;
- a Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status;
- the most recent Institutional Annual Report;
- the official record of the most recent comprehensive visit;
- the official record of any focused visits that have taken place and/or institutional changes approved since the last comprehensive evaluation;
- an expense voucher.

A Planning Checklist for the Team Chairperson

The Team Chair should contact the executive officer to request that the institution

- ☐ make hotel reservations
- ☐ reserve a team meeting room at the hotel, if possible
- ☐ provide a meeting room for the team on campus
- ☐ provide secretarial assistance or word processing equipment, if possible
- ☐ arrange for early meetings during the visit with
  - ◇ members of the governing board
  - ◇ representatives of the state coordinating board or other related agency as appropriate
  - ◇ faculty representatives
  - ◇ student representatives
  - ◇ alumni and community leaders
- ☐ announce the visit and the availability of the team to confer with institutional personnel during "open time"
- ☐ make certain that all key personnel are available during the visit
- ☐ set aside in the team's meeting room on campus the materials specified in this chapter
- ☐ mail all institutional materials to the team one month before the visit

The Team Chair should contact team members to

- ☐ welcome any new C-Es and offer to provide additional assistance
- ☐ notify team members of hotel and other arrangements
- ☐ schedule the first team meeting
- ☐ share the preliminary evaluation plan
- ☐ make tentative assignments of areas of special responsibility, including report writing
- ☐ request that they review the *Handbook of Accreditation* and that they bring it with them to the institution

The team chair should send copies of all correspondence to the Commission staff liaison who coordinated the visit.

A Sample SAS Worksheet

WORKSHEET FOR STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

INSTITUTION: JOHN DEWEY COLLEGE
1100 South State Street
Chicago, IL 60605

TYPE OF REVIEW: Comprehensive

DATE OF THIS REVIEW: October 17-19, 1994

DATE OF SAS: October 16, 1990

COMMISSION ACTION:

ACCEPTABLE PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT:

YES____ NO ____

If "NO," the team must recommend appropriate follow-up under PROGRESS REPORTS REQUIRED or FOCUSED VISITS.

STATUS: Accredited: 1952- .

Institution *Recommended Wording:* RETAIN ORIGINAL WORDING

Team *Recommended Wording:* RETAIN ORIGINAL WORDING

HIGHEST DEGREE AWARDED: Master's

Institution *Recommended Wording:* RETAIN ORIGINAL WORDING

Team *Recommended Wording:* RETAIN ORIGINAL WORDING

MOST RECENT COMMISSION ACTION: October 16, 1990

TO BE CHANGED BY THE COMMISSION OFFICE

STIPULATIONS: Out of state offerings are limited to the M.B.A. offered in Dubuque, IA. International offerings are limited to the Bachelor of Arts degree offered in Tokyo, Japan.

Institution *Recommended Wording:* Out of state offerings are limited to the M.B.A. offered in Dubuque, IA, and Kenosha, WI. International offerings are limited to the Bachelor of Arts degree offered in Tokyo, Japan.

Team *Recommended Wording:* Same as instituiton's recommended wording.

JOHN DEWEY COLLEGE
Page two

NEW DEGREE SITES: No prior Commission approval for offering exisiting degree programs at new sites in Cook and DuPage counties.

Institution *Recommended Wording:* RETAIN ORIGINAL WORDING

Team *Recommended Wording:* RETAIN ORIGINAL WORDING

PROGRESS REPORTS REQUIRED: None.

Team *Recommended Wording:* None.

CONTINGENCY REPORTS REQUIRED: None.

Team *Recommended Wording:* RETAIN ORIGINAL WORDING

MONITORING REPORTS REQUIRED: None.

Team *Recommended Wording:* A report by October 1, 1996, on recruitment and retention of students.

FOCUSED EVALUATIONS: None.

Team *Recommended Wording:* Focused visit in 1998-99 on faculty development program and development at the graduate level.

LAST COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATIONS: 1984-85.

TO BE CHANGED BY THE COMMISSION OFFICE

NEXT COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATIONS: 1994-95.

Team *Recommended Wording:* 2004-05.

A Sample Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet

8/17/94

NORTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400, Chicago, Illinois 60602-2504
(800) 621-7440 (312) 263-0456 (312) 263-7462 FAX

Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet

Institution: **John Dewey College**
1234 1100 South State Street
Chicago, IL 60605
Dr. Jane E. Jones, President
(312) 942-6060 Ext. 20

Date of Visit:
Oct 17, 1994 - Oct 19, 1994

Self-Study Coordinator: Dr. Steven J. Doe
Academic Dean
(312) 942-6060 Ext. 25

Draft Report Due: Nov 14, 1994
Final Report Due: Nov 28, 1994

Number on team: 4
Length of visit: 3 days
Evaluation fee: $6,250

Institution information: Legal status: Public
Level of highest degree offered: Master's
FTE student enrollment: 1,405

NCA staff liaison:
Dr. George Johnson

Type of evaluation: Continued accreditation
Other visit features: N/A

Evaluation Team (Chair listed first):

51235	**Dr. Emma Willard** Dean, College of Education Hutchins University Aspen, CO 80303	(303) 499-7111 (303) 499-7112 FAX
51157	**Dr. Willard Gibbs** Professor of Physics Oppenheimer University One University Place Los Alamos, NM 87105	(505) 666-1212 (505) 666-1255 FAX
51892	**Dr. Elizabeth Peabody** President Curti College Madison, WI 53703	(608) 521-6371 (608) 521-6376 FAX
51434	**Dr. Charles S. Pierce** Chair, Humanities Division Fitzgerald College 2500 College Drive St. Paul, MN 55422	(612) 323-4140 (612) 323-4141 FAX

Commission Fee Schedule for 1994-95 Evaluation Processes

☐ Fees for Team Visits to Institutions

- **Fixed Fee Basis.** The fixed fee schedule for evaluation visits is based on the number of evaluation team members and the length (number of days) of the visit. The evaluation fee covers all direct costs associated with the evaluation visit. The following table illustrates the formula used to calculate the fixed fee.

1994-95 Evaluations • Sample Fixed Fee Schedule
(N = number of persons on team.)

	N = 1	N = 2	N = 3	N = 4	N = 5	N = 6	N = 7	N = 8
1 day	1,800	2,870	3,940	5,010	6,080	7,150	8,220	9,290
2 days	1,955	3,180	4,405	5,630	6,855	8,080	9,305	10,530
3 days	2,110	3,490	4,870	6,250	7,630	9,010	10,390	11,770

Computing additional team members:

◇ For a two day visit, add $1,225 for each additional Consultant-Evaluator assigned to the team.

◇ For a three-day visit, add $1,380 for each additional Consultant-Evaluator assigned to the team.

- **Cost-Plus Basis.** This fee structure is designed for multi-site or sequential visits where additional or extensive team travel is required. Use of this fee structure requires staff approval: direct cost of the visit + 10% of direct cost. A deposit is required before the visit.

☐ Fees for Other Types of Evaluations

Evaluators' Panel Process $500

Pre-Visits by Team Chairs ..... cost-plus basis

Generalist Service ..... cost-plus basis

Confirmation Visits ..... cost-plus basis

Preliminary Information Form Process ..... $1,000 with initial submission; $500 on completion

11 Other Monitoring Visits

FOCUSED EVALUATIONS

Focused evaluations are of two types, those **mandated by prior Commission action** to evaluate specific areas or issues within institutions and those that occur as part of **review of proposed institutional changes.** Focused evaluations do not require a comprehensive institutional self-study process, nor do they require a comprehensive Self-Study Report. An institution's preparation for a focused evaluation will vary in nature and scope according to the specific areas to be examined. Its report will concentrate on those areas. In addition, the materials for the evaluation will include any documents the institution and the Commission staff believe the Evaluation Team should have before arriving on campus, including but not limited to catalogs, faculty and student handbooks, and relevant portions of the Basic Institutional Data Forms.

☐ Institutional Report for a Commission-Mandated Focused Evaluation

Because focused evaluations are so specific and usually are limited to two or three topics or areas, institutional reports for focused evaluations will vary considerably in structure, concept, and length. It is important to assess the specific areas of focus in relation to the overall institutional context. For example, if a focused evaluation is scheduled to review faculty-administration relations, the report should comment on the effect these issues have had on the educational program and student morale. Institutions preparing for a focused evaluation should maintain regular contact with the Commission staff liaison and discuss plans for the report.

All Commission-mandated focused evaluations during 1994-95 will be expanded to include a review of the institution's plan or program to assess student academic achievement. The information on this requirement provided in Chapter 14 will be useful to institutions preparing for these focused evaluations.

The report any given institution prepares will be shaped by the specific issues that prompted the evaluation, but all institutional reports for focused evaluations will have the following essential elements: **an introduction** and **an examination of the area(s) of focus.**

In the **introduction** the institution briefly cites the Commission action or policy that prompted the evaluation, discusses the process by which the report has been prepared, and explains the organization of the report.

The **body** of a focused report is an evaluation of the areas to be examined. If the focused evaluation is being conducted to assess progress in responding to previous Commission concerns, this section of the report will explain the actions that have been taken since the last evaluation. It should evaluate the progress made and indicate any further actions that may be planned. Depending on the areas of focus, this part of the report may be supplemented by audited financial statements, Board minutes, curriculum information, or other appendices that document the progress summarized in the report itself.

Institutional reports for focused evaluations will vary in length; length should be adequate to cover every essential element.

☐ Institutional Report for a Focused Evaluation for Institutional Change

Focused reports for institutional change follow the same basic format as reports for Commission-mandated focused visits, but the text must focus on the specific request for extension of accreditation to include the change. To support that request, the body of the report must address these points (see Chapter 12).

☐ Team Preparations for a Focused Evaluation

Information provided earlier on planning, conducting, and reporting the results of an evaluation visit are necessary reading for every team undertaking any evaluation for the Commission (see Chapters 7 and 8). Focused evaluations alter the scope of an institution's preparation and materials for a visit, as well as the nature of the team's evaluation and report. Focused evaluations occur between comprehensive evaluations and examine only certain aspects of an institution (see Chapter 2). They are meant to monitor developments, changes, or concerns between comprehensive visits. In most respects, the policies and procedures governing focused evaluations are similar to those governing comprehensive evaluations; however, there are a number of significant differences.

- **Charge to the Team.** The first of these differences is that the role of the Evaluation Team is different from that of a team conducting a comprehensive evaluation. The focused Evaluation Team does not evaluate whether an institution fulfills the Criteria for Accreditation; nor does it recommend that candidacy or accreditation be granted, continued, or denied. However, it can recommend Probation if circumstances warrant, and in very rare situations, that status be withdrawn.

  The team's basic role is to evaluate the areas specified as the focus of the visit and to provide the Commission with a progress report on developments at the institution since the last comprehensive evaluation. However, if matters outside the focus of the visit come to the attention of the team it should note these, recommending changes in the Statement of Affiliation Status if necessary to deal with these additional areas (e.g., modifying current wording or calling for a report or a focused visit). The focused Evaluation Team does not simply monitor. The team may recommend that a program, site, or other operation be added, restricted, or even discontinued. Some changes will result in changes to the SISA rather than the SAS.

- **Team preparations for the focused visit.** Before the visit, the Commission sends team members an Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet, a Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status, the most recent Annual Report to the Commission, and the official record of the most recent comprehensive evaluation and any subsequent official interactions with the Commission. The institution sends each team member a copy of its focused report and any supporting materials it believes the team should have before arriving on campus, including catalogs, faculty and student handbooks, and relevant portions of the Commission's Basic Institutional Data Forms.

  The Team Chair proceeds as he or she would for a comprehensive evaluation: initiating contact with the institution and the team, coordinating arrangements for the visit, and communicating the plan for the visit to both the institution and the team members.

- **Conducting the focused visit.** Focused evaluations typically involve two team members for two days. Some unique focused visits may require several days and several team members. At the first team meeting on the evening before the visit officially begins, the chairperson reviews the purpose of the visit, formulates final assignments, and covers the other relevant parts of the outline discussed earlier (see Chapter 7). The focused Evaluation Team is principally concerned with the aspects specified for the focused evaluation (e.g., enrollment patterns, finances, building program, curriculum development, specific requests for institutional change). Therefore, the data needed by the team are circumscribed. The team will need to direct its energies primarily toward gathering the data it needs for dealing with the areas of focus. Its fundamental purposes are to determine whether the institution has addressed the areas of concern and to assess the impact of significant changes related to them.

- **Writing the Team Report.** The team summarizes its findings concerning the areas of focus in a written report. While each Team Report of a focused evaluation is different, every one must contain four sections; three of these are the same as those in a comprehensive report; one is different.

  - ◇ Section I, an introduction that provides certain matters of information.

- ◇ Section II provides the team assessment of the areas of focus and identifies related institutional strengths and concerns.
- ◇ Section III provides the team's advice and suggestions to the institution.
- ◇ Section IV provides the team's formal recommendation and its rationale for that recommendation.

It is Section II of a focused report that differs significantly from that of a comprehensive report because of the differences in purpose between comprehensive and focused evaluations. If the focused visit was required by a previous evaluation, the team's responsibility is to assess whether the institution has made progress in the areas identified and to report significant developments since the last evaluation visit. If the focused evaluation was prompted by a proposed change, the team's responsibility is to evaluate whether that change should be approved. This section of the Team Report should be detailed enough to allow readers to understand the most important changes the institution has undergone or is planning and to evaluate how well the institution has responded to previous Commission concerns.

Sections I and III are identical to those discussed in Chapter 8. Section IV is basically the same as that discussed in Chapter 8. Like the report of a comprehensive evaluation, the report of a focused evaluation concludes with a fourth section: the team's recommendation. Like the comprehensive Team Report, the focused report has a standard recommendation sentence, a rationale, and a Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status.

The recommendation sentence for every focused evaluation is the same:

> *"The team's recommendations for action concerning College X are -----. The reasons for the team's recommendations are:"*

The recommendation sentence is followed by the team's statement of its rationale for each specific recommendation. The team does this by discussing its suggested version of the Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status. If the change does not require a modification of the SAS but, instead, a revision of the SISA, the team will make that modification.

Instructions for the preparation and distribution of the draft and final Team Reports are the same as those described for the Team Report for the comprehensive evaluation.

☐ Review Processes and Commission Action

As is the case with comprehensive evaluations, most focused visits must pass through a review process before final action is taken by the Commission. Institutions undergoing focused visits may choose the process they prefer. Institutions undergoing focused evaluations for approval of a proposed change also may elect to bypass the review processes and go directly to the Commission for action (see Chapter 9).

SPECIAL CASES

☐ Pre-Visits

Pre-visits are seldom necessary. However, if special features about an institution or its evaluation appear to require extensive planning before the team visit, the chairperson and the Executive Officer may decide that a pre-visit is desirable. Such visits normally last only one day. The chairperson makes the final decision about

conducting a pre-visit after consulting with the Commission staff. The institution is billed separately for the cost of the pre-visit by the Commission office.

A pre-visit is devoted to establishing the details of the evaluation plan. The Team Chair examines the institution's logistical or programmatic particularities, and develops an understanding of its atmosphere and style so that the team can approach its evaluation with a minimum of lost time and a maximum of effectiveness.

The Team Chair may review the institution's Self-Study Report as a part of the pre-visit to determine whether any additional information may be needed by the team. The chairperson may also check on practical arrangements for the evaluation visit and confirm appointments with members of the institution's state or local governing board(s).

As soon as the pre-visit is completed, the Team Chair mails an expense voucher for the trip to the Commission office for reimbursement. At the same time, the chairperson should contact the Commission staff liaison if the pre-visit has indicated that there may be significant omissions or imbalances in the team or if preparations for the evaluation appear to be at variance with the information the Commission has provided.

☐ Sequential Visits

In most cases, visits to institutions with off-campus programs or sites follow the patterns described earlier in this handbook. Establishing the logistics of the visit may require a pre-visit by the Team Chair; conducting the evaluation may involve team members separating for part of the visit to examine different sites—but the basic structure of the evaluation visit remains the same.

In some cases, however, an institution may have so many sites, so widely dispersed within and outside of its home state, the North Central region, and/or the United States that a sequential visit conducted over a longer period of time is required for a thorough evaluation of the institution and its operations. Sequential visits require that the Commission and the institution agree on an appropriate evaluation design and that Evaluation Team members be willing to commit themselves to a longer period of time away from their home campuses than is required for other types of visits. Team members who agree to serve on sequential visits receive additional information about the visit from the Commission staff. Fees for sequential evaluations are billed on a cost-plus basis.

☐ Interregional Visits

When the Commission visits an institution with a site outside the North Central region, the team may include representatives from the institutional accrediting association in whose region the site is located. The Commission retains full responsibility for these visits, including composing the team, establishing the procedures for the visit, and taking final accrediting action. The Commission regards its Team Report as the only official report of the visit and sends a copy of it to the other regional association as well as to the institution. The institution is billed for all Evaluation Team members in accordance with the Commission's fee schedule.

☐ Joint Visits

In a joint accrediting team visit, the Commission and another accrediting body together name a single team that prepares a single written report. The Commission and the other accrediting agency develop an agreement that outlines procedures and processes for the visit; the institution requesting a joint visit accepts the agreement. In some cases the team is chaired and the majority of the Team Report written by an evaluator from the other association; in others, the Commission appoints the chair. In either case, each accrediting body makes its accrediting decision separately. Commission policy restricts joint accrediting team visits with other recognized institutional accrediting bodies to those that accredit institutions primarily offering post-

baccalaureate programs in a single discipline. The institution is billed separately for each organization's participation.

☐ Generalist Visits

At the request of the institution, the Commission staff will assign a person to serve as a generalist during the evaluation visit to the institution by a recognized specialized accrediting body. The role of the generalist is to assist the Evaluation Team in approaching its task within the overall context of the institution. The institution is billed for the generalist's participation by the Commission.

☐ Confirmation/Advisory Visits

Occasionally an institution asks the Commission to conduct a visit required by another external agency. For example, some branches of the military, state agencies, and foreign countries require a site visit by a regional accrediting agency as a part of their formal approval processes. When a site visit is not required by the Commission itself, the Commission cooperates by sending an Evaluation Team to write a confirmation report for the institution to submit to the proper authorities.

Occasionally, the Commission may suggest that an institution host a team charged with advising the Commissioners about significant changes at the institution. Confirmation/advisory visits do not require official Commission action and, therefore, do not involve any processes beyond providing a report to the institution. The institution is billed for the confirmation visit by the Commission.

☐ International Visits

The Commission policies on institutional change mandate that evaluation visits be conducted for certain international education programs and sites. Because of the unique nature of international visits, the Commission has developed a separate "Practical Guide for Organizing and Conducting International Evaluation Visits" to assist institutions and teams in planning for and conducting these visits. The "Practival Guide" is provide to Evaluation Teams making international visits. It is available on request from the Commission office. Fees for international visits are billed on a cost-plus basis.

Chapter Reference

Principles of Good Practice in Overseas International Education Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals

Introduction from the Commission

The Commission endorsed these *Principles* on March 19, 1990, not as a set of standards against which programs must be measured, for it understands that unique circumstances will shape unique programs. It considers this document to be a working document of the Commission, subject to revision as more is learned from current experience. The *Principles* have received the endorsement of all of the regional accrediting commissions. They therefore reflect an emerging national consensus on good practices in specific types of international education.

The *Principles* speak to matters that deserve the scrutiny of all institutions engaged in or planning to engage in developing campuses or moving educational programs abroad. The *Principles* also should assist teams in understanding the full scope of the challenges involved in mounting and conducting international educational operations of quality.

From time to time new developments in higher education emerge almost without warning. In the absence of long experience or significant expertise, institutions wishing to participate in these developments often seek some external criteria by which to evaluate options. In the past decade international education has become a major new thrust at many institutions. Not only are institutions developing new study abroad opportunities for their students, they are also establishing branch campuses abroad and moving whole degree programs overseas. Higher education varies greatly throughout the nations of the world; so, too, have the various initiatives followed by U.S. institutions anxious to establish international operations. Historically groups concerned with international education have concentrated on good practices in study abroad, in international recruitment, and in transfer of credit. NAFSA, for example, has developed useful guidelines on all of these forms of international education. But the transplantation of U.S. education abroad, U.S. education aimed primarily if not solely at non-U.S. nationals, constitutes something not yet covered in existing guidelines.

The Principles first appeared in a slightly different form in October, 1989, as the Commission's *Guidelines for Good Practice in Overseas International Education Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals*. The Commission continues to review their usefulness, learning from institutions engaged in these ventures, from teams that evaluate them, and from the broader international community interested in them. The Commission welcomes comments on the Principles.

The Commission accredits institutions, not specific programs. Consequently, **these Principles do not supplant the Commission's General Institutional Requirements and Criteria for Accreditation or Criteria for Candidacy. Nor do they replace the Commission's processes for approving institutional change.** The Commission's *Handbook of Accreditation* clearly outlines all the requirements that institutions must meet to achieve and continue affiliation with the Commission; it also describes the change processes open to affiliated institutions.

The Principles

Institutional Mission

1. The international program is rooted in the U.S. institution's stated mission and purposes and reflects any special social, religious, and ethical elements of that mission.

2. The faculty, administration, and the governing board of the U.S. institution understand the relationship of the international program to the institution's stated mission and purposes.

Authorization

3. The international program has received all appropriate internal institutional approvals, including that of the governing board.

4. The international program has received all appropriate external approvals where required, including system administration, government bodies, and accrediting associations.

5. The U.S. institution documents the accepted legal basis for its operations in the host country.

Instructional Program

6. The U.S. institution specifies the educational needs to be met by its international program.

7. The content of the international educational program is subject to review by the U.S. institution's faculty.

8. The international education program reflects the educational emphasis of the U.S. institution, including a commitment to general education when appropriate.

9. The educational program is taught by faculty with appropriate academic preparation and language proficiencies, and whose credentials have been reviewed by the U.S. institution.

10. The standard of student achievement in the international program is equivalent to the standard of student achievement on the U.S. campus.

11. The international educational program where possible and appropriate is adapted to the culture of the host country.

Resources

12. The institution currently uses and assures the continuing use of adequate physical facilities for its international educational program, including classrooms, offices, libraries, and laboratories, and provides access to computer facilities where appropriate.

13. The U.S. institution has demonstrated its financial capacity to underwrite the international program without diminishing its financial support of the U.S. campus. Financing of the international program is incorporated into the regular budgeting and auditing process.

Admissions and Records

14. International students admitted abroad meet admissions requirements similar to those used for international students admitted to the U.S. campus, including appropriate language proficiencies.

15. The U.S. institution exercises control over recruitment and admission of students in the international program.

16. All international students admitted to the U.S. program are recognized as students of the U.S. institution.

17. All college-level academic credits earned in the international program are applicable to degree programs at the U.S. institution.

18. The U.S. institution maintains official records of academic credit earned in its international program.

19. The official transcript of record issued by the U.S. institution follows the institution's practices in identifying by site or through course numbering the credits earned in its off-campus programs.

Students

20. The U.S. institution assures that its international program provides a supportive environment for student development, consistent with the culture and mores of the international setting.

21. Students in the international program are fully informed as to services that will or will not be provided.

Control and Administration

22. The international program is controlled by the U.S. institution.

23. The teaching and administrative staff abroad responsible for the educational quality of the international program are accountable to a resident administrator of the U.S. institution.

24. The U.S. institution formally and regularly reviews all faculty and staff associated with its international program.

25. The U.S. institution assesses its international program on a regular basis in light of institutional goals and incorporates these outcomes into its regular planning process.

Ethics and Public Disclosure

26. The U.S. institution can provide to its accrediting agencies upon request a full accounting of the financing of its international program, including an accounting of funds designated for third parties within any contractual relationship.

27. The U.S. institution assures that all media presentations about the international program are factual, fair, and accurate.

28. The U.S. institution's primary catalog describes its international program.

29. The U.S. institution does not sell or franchise the rights to its name or its accreditation.

30. The U.S. institution assures that all references to transfer of academic credit reflect the reality of U.S. practice.

31. The U.S. institution assures that if U.S. accreditation is mentioned in materials related to the international program, the role and purpose of U.S. accreditation is fairly and accurately explained within these materials.

Contractual Arrangements

32. The official contract is in English and the primary language of the contracting institution.

33. The contract specifically provides that the U.S. institution controls the international program in conformity with these Principles and the requirements of the U.S. institution's accreditations.

34. The U.S. institution confirms that the foreign party to the contract is legally qualified to enter into the contract.

35. The contract clearly states the legal jurisdiction under which its provisions will be interpreted will be that of the U.S. institution.

36. Conditions for program termination specified in the contract include appropriate protection for enrolled students.

37. All contractual arrangements must be consistent with the regional commission's document defining contractual relationships with non-regionally accredited institutions.

Endorsed by the Executive Directors of the regional institutional accrediting bodies of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation on February 14, 1990.

Endorsed by the North Central Association's Commission on Institutions of Higher Education on March 19, 1990, as a working document, with principles to be applied consistent with its own criteria.

12 Institutional Change

DEFINING INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

The Commission recognizes that change within affiliated institutions is as constant and rapid as it is challenging and inevitable. Some institutional changes fall within the mission and scope of the institution (e.g., changing personnel or redefining course requirements). These do not require special notification of the Commission and do not affect an institution's candidate or accredited status with the Commission.

Other types of change (such as adding an instructional site that offers a total degree program) come under the Commission's policies regarding institutional change and do affect an institution's relationship with the Commission. The Commission relies on affiliated institutions to report any changes under consideration that might affect their relationship with the Commission.

After a decade of defining institutional change through its Statement of Affiliation Status, the Commission decided to enact a series of policies that state explicitly the types of institutional change requiring Commission action and the processes by which the Commission will act.

☐ Commission Policies Regarding Institutional Dynamics

The Commission's revised policies on institutional change (identified in the Commission policy book under the heading I.C. Policies Regarding Institutional Dynamics) are reprinted here.

■ I.C.1. Commission Right to Reconsider Affiliation

The Commission on Institutions of Higher Education reserves the right to reconsider the affiliation of an institution at any time. Clearly specified reasons related to Commission Criteria, Requirements and/or policies will be provided by the Commission for its reconsideration.

■ I.C.2. Institutional Changes Requiring Commission Approval Prior to Their Initiation

The Commission on Institutions of Higher Education includes all institutional activities within the institution's affiliation status. Therefore, an institution planning to start certain types of changes must request that the Commission extend its status to include the new institutional activities. This request is to be made and Commission approval received before the change can be initiated. With the limited exceptions noted in Policy I.C.2c., when a staff recommendation can be made directly to the Commission, Commission decisions about these matters are based on a recommendation from one of the Commission's peer review processes.

The Commission is supportive of educational innovation and change necessary to improve educational quality. However, the Commission has a responsibility to seek assurance that institutional changes, particularly those that signify a departure from an institution's stated mission and purposes operative at the time of the most recent evaluation, are both appropriate to the institution and within the institution's capability of providing with quality.

Because some new institutional activities typically require significant investment in faculty, facilities, and other support services, the Commission has determined that it can act on an institutional request only after an evaluation visit, either focused or comprehensive, has recommended extension of affiliation to include the change or after an Evaluators' Panel has recommended that the change be approved.

Changes requiring Commission approval include, but are not limited to, the following (reformatted from policies I.C.2-I.C.5):

Changes in Stipulations by the Commission	Approval Process Required
Changing the stipulations within the current affiliation status. (I.C.2b.)	Evaluators' Panel or On-Site Visit
Changes in Educational Programs	
Adding a different degree level. (I.C.2a.)	On-Site Visit
Delivering for the first time a degree program offered primarily through distance delivery methods. (I.C.2a.)	On-Site Visit
Initiating a significant new academic program or major that requires substantial new financial investment or substantial reallocation of existing financial resources. (I.C.2b.)	Evaluators' Panel or On-Site Visit
Establishing a new academic program that shifts the mission of the institution (e.g., expanding from focused technical or professional education to broader liberal education, or the reverse). (I.C.2b.)	Evaluators' Panel or On-Site Visit
Offering courses regularly that are not currently included within the institution's affiliated status. (I.C.2c.)	Staff Recommendation, Evaluators' Panel, or On-Site Visit
Changes in Locations	
Delivering for the first time at an international site a degree program for either non-U.S. nationals or U.S. nationals who are not currently enrolled in the institution. (I.C.2a.)	On-Site Visit
Opening (or moving to) a new site that houses a full range of instruction as well as administrative and support services (e.g., a new campus or a new branch). (I.C.2b.)	Evaluators' Panel or On-Site Visit
Adding an instructional site at which the institution provides a total degree program(s). (I.C.2b.)	Evaluators' Panel or On-Site Visit
Closing an instructional site at which the institution has provided a total degree program(s). (I.C.2c.)	Staff Recommendation, Evaluators' Panel, or On-Site Visit
Relations with Other Institutions/Groups	
Contracting with entities not regionally accredited to provide 50% or more of the credit-bearing instruction in the affiliated institution's program. (I.C.2a.)	On-Site Visit
Contracting with other regionally accredited institutions to provide 50% or more of the credit-bearing instruction involved in the affiliated institution's program. (I.C.2b.)	Evaluators' Panel or On-Site Visit
Merging/combining an accredited affiliated institution and an institution holding candidate status with a regional accrediting association. (I.C.2b.)	Evaluators' Panel or On-Site Visit
Merging of the affiliated institution and an entity not accredited by a regional institutional accrediting association. (I.C.2a.)	On-Site Visit
Changing institutional affiliation with a sponsoring organization (e.g., changing denominational affiliation). (I.C.2c.)	Staff Recommendation, Evaluators' Panel, or On-Site Visit

Relations with Other Institutions/Groups continued...	**Approval Process Required**
Changing ownership, control, and/or the legal status of the institution. (I.C.3.)	On-Site Review After Initiation[1]
Transferring to a new entity the accredited statuses of two or more regionally accredited entities. (I.C.3.)	On-Site Review After Initiation[1]
Merging two or more regionally accredited entities, or the absorption of a regionally accredited entity by another. (I.C.3.)	On-Site Review After Initiation[1]
Notification of sanctions applied by governmental agencies. (I.C.5.)	Might require Commission monitoring[3]
Public sanctions applied by other institutional or professional accrediting associations. (I.C.5.)	Might require Commission monitoring[3]
Relationships with Students/Faculty/Administration/Governing Body	
Changing, after significant planning, the character and nature of the student body. (I.C.2b.)	Evaluators' Panel or On-Site Visit
Absorbing unanticipated but significant changes in the character and nature of the student body (e.g., assuming oversight for programs orphaned by a closing institution). (I.C.2c.)	Staff Recommendation, Evaluators' Panel, or On-Site Visit
Significant unanticipated reduction in program offering, faculty, and/or enrollment. (I.C.5.)	Might require Commission monitoring[3]
Existence of highly publicized and divisive controversies among the governing board, the administration, and/or the faculty. (I.C.5.)	Might require Commission monitoring[3]
Financial and Ethical Matters	
Financial audit reports that raise serious concerns about financial viability or financial management practices. (I.C.5.)	Might require Commission monitoring[3]
Declaring financial exigency. (I.C.4.)	Staff Report to the Commission[2]
Declaring bankruptcy. (I.C.4.)	Staff Report to the Commission[2]
Serious legal, financial, or ethical investigations. (I.C.5.)	Might require Commission monitoring[3]
Announcing closure of an institution. (I.C.4.)	Staff Report to the Commission[2]
Disasters that jeopardize the institution's physical infrastructure. (I.C.5.)	Might require Commission monitoring[3]
Serious misrepresentation to students and the public. (I.C.5.)	Might require Commission monitoring[3]

[1] The Commission includes all institutional activities within the institution's affiliation status. Because of the unique variables involved in some institutional changes, the Commission, at the request of the affiliated institution, will change the affiliation status to include the change; however, it will review the impact of the change through an on-site evaluation, either focused or comprehensive, within one year after the effective date of the change.

2 Some institutional activities are of such gravity that the Commission requires that it be fully apprised of their apparent or potential consequences. At Commission expense, Commission staff will visit the institution and prepare a written report for the Commission. The Commission will review the report and determine appropriate action, including a call for further monitoring if necessary.

A note about closing institutions. When the governing board of an accredited institution decides to close the institution, the institution may seek from the Commission an extension of its accreditation beyond the publicly-announced date of closing. The sole purpose of the extension is to ensure that the institution's students can complete degrees and programs without undue difficulty. Extension of accreditation is typically for no longer than one year beyond the date of closing. To approve an extension of accreditation, the Commission must be assured of (1) the ongoing legal existence of the institution beyond closing, (2) the continuation of appropriate recordkeeping processes, and (3) the existence of appropriate processes to guarantee that all degrees granted after the date of closing meet the graduation requirements established by the institution.

3 Some circumstances might threaten the stability of the institution. The Commission's intent is to ensure those circumstances do not jeopardize the affiliation status of the institution. At the request of the institution or at the request of the Commission staff, the Commission may choose to monitor these situations through reports or on-site visits.

EVALUATING INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

☐ Timing the Submission of a Request for Institutional Change

Any affiliated institution may initiate a request for the Commission to review changes it plans to introduce at any time. **The only institutions limited in this regard are those institutions appealing a decision of the Commission.**

Since many changes require Commission action, careful attention should be paid to the timing of the request. **The written request must be made early enough for the proposed change to be reviewed by the appropriate approval process** (staff, Evaluators' Panel, focused visit team, comprehensive evaluation team, the review process) **and the Commission to act before the date at which the institution plans to effect the change.** The institution should write or call the Commission staff liaison early in the consideration of an institutional change to determine the review process appropriate to the change and to develop a realistic timetable for seeking approval for the change from the Commission. The Commission meets to take institutional actions three times each year—February, August, and November. The institution's representative and the Commission staff liaison will need to determine at which of these meetings action will be needed so that, if it is approved, the change can be implemented on the schedule planned by the institution.

☐ Information and Documentation to Support a Request for Institutional Change

The institution's written request and supporting documentation as well as the "institutional context" all play a critical role in the Commission's decision of whether to approve the requested change. The change in and of itself is not what is being accredited. Rather, the Commission considers the change within the context of the entire institution, deciding whether the nature or extent of the proposed change would require reconsideration of the affiliation of the institution with the Commission or whether the change could be implemented without affecting the institution's current status.

Any request for approval of institutional change must provide a well-written and comprehensive analysis of the proposed change.

1. **A concise statement of the requested change.** The statement should explicitly describe the nature of the proposed institutional change.

2. **A rationale for the requested change.** The rationale should include (a) how this change comes under the Commission's policies, and (b) why the institution has decided to initiate the change.

3. **A description of how the change is appropriate to the institution's purposes.** The request should give evidence that the proposed change is congruent with the overall mission and purposes of the institution and is a logical development of the institution at this point in its history.

4. **Consideration of how the proposed change relates to the contents of the last NCA comprehensive Team Report.** The request should describe how the proposed change would affect the scope of the institution's educational programs and activities as they were assessed on the last team's visit. If the change grows out of institutional strengths reported by the team, that should be noted. If the proposed change relates or would have an effect upon any of the team's concerns, these concerns should be addressed.

5. **A description of the planning process that led to the proposed change.** Typically, a recent Needs Analysis conducted by the institution as part of this process should be included as well as other relevant planning documents. An effective Needs Analysis confirms that:

   ◊ there is an unmet need in the geographic area for the academic subjects, degrees, credentials, and/or certificates being proposed;

   ◊ the proposed change is likely to attract, initially, and maintain over a reasonable number of years, a sufficient number of enrolled, tuition-paying students to be financially viable.

6. **Evidence that the institution has the necessary internal and external approvals to initiate the change.**

   ◊ **Internal Approvals.** An institution should state clearly how all required faculty, administrative, and governing board approvals have been obtained. Confirming documentation should be provided.

   ◊ **External Approvals.** The type of external approvals needed will depend upon the state in which the institution is located or the state in which the institution has proposed to institute a change. Each state has different regulations.

   When contemplating off-campus sites or branches, the institution should contact the appropriate state higher education agency early in the planning process, especially when the branch is in a state in which the institution has not operated in the past. The institution must provide evidence to the Commission that all legal requirements have been met. If no external approval is required, that should be stated and confirming documentation provided.

7. **An analysis of the institution's continued ability to meet the General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for Accreditation.** The request needs to address the possible effect the proposed change will have on the institution's continuing ability to meet the General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for Accreditation.

8. **An analysis of the anticipated effect of the proposed change on the other parts of the institution.** Any time an institution makes a change, that change inevitably affects the institution's other activities. Effective requests provide evidence that the institution has taken into account potential problems. Rather than emphasizing the salutary impact of the proposed change, the institution should provide a critical analysis of the anticipated effect of the proposed change throughout the institution.

9. **Evidence that the institution has established the processes to assure that it has the capability to initiate and maintain the proposed change and to monitor acceptable quality once the change**

has been implemented. The request should describe the decision-making processes used to conclude that the institution has the resources needed to carry out the proposed change. The request should specify how the change will be integrated into the institution's plan to document student academic achievement. If program review exists, the request should include an analysis of how systematic evaluation of the proposed change will be incorporated into the institution's established program review processes.

10. **Evidence that the institution has organized and planned for adequate human, financial, physical, and instructional resources to initiate and support the proposed change.** For all resources, the institution should clearly indicate which resources are already in place, which ones have yet to be acquired, and what strategies will be employed to acquire any necessary new resources. Successful change requests usually include these elements of evidence:

- **Human Resources**
  - ◇ a person qualified by education and experience to administer the proposed change, such as a site or new degree program;
  - ◇ an administrative structure through which appropriate control can be exercised;
  - ◇ the number and qualifications of administrative and support personnel needed to support the proposed change;
  - ◇ the number and qualifications of faculty needed to provide the instruction required by the proposed change. Faculty vitae and/or proposed requirements are provided;
  - ◇ some recruitment of administrators, faculty, or support staff has been done and persons qualified by degrees and experience have been found to teach and to serve as administrators and support staff;
  - ◇ regular evaluation, using published criteria and processes comparable to those in other programs of the institution, of faculty and academic professionals (e.g., instructional designers, proctors, tutors, counselors, media specialists, etc.)
- **Financial Resources**
  - ◇ the financial resources are available and budgeted to cover all start-up costs as well as anticipated costs to maintain the necessary administrative, instructional, and support personnel over succeeding years;
  - ◇ an institutionally-approved projected budget for the first year of the new program that includes one-time start up expenses, the anticipated sources of the first year funding, projected operating costs and income for at least three years, and a line item justification showing the derivation of each estimation of cost and revenue;
  - ◇ a sound business plan enumerating underlying assumptions has been received and approved by the Chief Executive Officer and the Board;
  - ◇ sufficient financial aid is available to attract and retain students likely to succeed in the proposed program.
- **Physical Resources**
  - ◇ physical facilities for lease/purchase, which provide appropriate space, facilities, library, and equipment, including any media to be utilized (satellite, microwave, compressed video, interactive computer, etc.).

- ◇ student services of the institution are available, accessible, and appropriate for the types of programs to be offered and the students to be served.

- **Instructional Resources**

  - ◇ a coherent curriculum as documented by the syllabi of a substantial portion of the courses to be offered that include learning outcomes that can be demonstrated and assessed;

  - ◇ admission and degree requirements for the proposed change have been developed and approved by faculty;

  - ◇ the proposed change is integrated into the institution's program for assessing student academic achievement;

  - ◇ the library core collection is adequate for faculty's course preparation and for student use;

  - ◇ access to learning resources, including but not limited to academic and student support services, such as advising, career counseling and placement, are available and are of the quality, quantity, and type needed to support the programs to be offered.

☐ Processes for Approval of Change Requests

Depending on the nature of a proposed change, various individuals and groups are empowered to make a recommendation to the Commission to approve an institutional change:

- **Staff Process.** As specified in Commission policy, Commission staff may recommend, for Commission approval, certain types of proposed change. If the staff liaison determines that the nature of the change requires consideration by more than one person, he or she may require that the change be considered instead by an Evaluators' Panel or by an Evaluation Team.

- **Evaluators' Panel Process.** An Evaluators' Panel consists of three persons drawn from the Consultant-Evaluator Corps. Each panel member is asked to conduct an independent review of the written request, to participate in a conference call among the panelists, and then to recommend either

  - ◇ that the change and, if applicable, the corresponding alteration in the SAS, be approved, or alternatively that the SISA be modified, or

  - ◇ that a focused visit by an Evaluation Team be scheduled to evaluate the change and make an independent judgment on whether or not to recommend it.

  The decision of a majority of the evaluators will be the decision of the evaluators as a group. If the Evaluators' Panel recommends a focused visit by an Evaluation Team, the institution may request that a visit be scheduled or it may withdraw its change request.

  If the request for institutional change is withdrawn, the institution must wait one year before resubmitting a request for an Evaluators' Panel review of the same change.

  Once an Evaluators' Panel recommends the approval of an institutional change, the recommendation is forwarded to the Commission for consideration at its next scheduled meeting. The Commission may require further information (and, if necessary, an evaluation visit to gather it) before acting.

- **Evaluation Visit Process.** An institution seeking approval for certain proposed changes can request a focused visit or use an already scheduled comprehensive evaluation visit. Institutions that undergo

focused evaluations for change have the option of having the Team Report and recommendation reviewed either by a Readers' Panel or by a Review Committee.

When timing alone is of critical importance, an institution may request that its staff liaison bypass the review process and take the team recommendation directly to the Commission for action. This bypass is not without risk because the Commission can act only to approve or deny the change request. If the request is denied, the institution must submit a new request and undergo a new evaluation process if it wishes to pursue the change.

- **Process for Acting upon Requests to Provide a Limited Number of Courses Not Part of Degree Programs.** An institution may seek to offer no more than five courses or 20 semester hours per year at its current location(s) in any calendar year:

  This policy usually applies to an institution that chooses to offer a few courses beyond its level of degree (e.g., a baccalaureate institution offering a few courses that carry graduate credit) or an institution that seeks to offer a few courses outside of its stipulation (e.g., a college specifically limited to programs in the arts offering a few courses in management and business).

  In determining whether to extend the accreditation of an institution to include such courses, the Commission weighs

  - ◇ whether the institution intends to provide such courses on a routine and consistent basis (e.g., every summer school session);
  - ◇ whether the institution has appropriate faculty and learning resources to support the courses;
  - ◇ whether the institution has appropriate authorization, internal and external, for the offering of the courses; and
  - ◇ whether the courses are of appropriate rigor and content.

  In most situations, the staff will make the review and will carry a recommendation to the Commission. This wording—or an appropriate variation of it—will appear in the stipulation:

  "Course offerings at the ———— level are limited to five courses or twenty semester hours a year."

13 The Commission's Candidacy Program

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM PROCESS

Institutions of higher education considering initial affiliation with the Commission complete a Preliminary Information Form (PIF). For each General Institutional Requirement (GIR), the form requests information and/or data and requires specific documentation to verify the institution's responses to those requests. The Commission staff uses the PIF process to screen applying institutions. The Commission conducts an on-site evaluation after an institution's PIF provides convincing evidence that the Evaluation Team might be able to agree that each GIR is met. The PIF is available on request from the Commission office.

☐ Procedure for Submitting a PIF

A fee of $1,000 must accompany the PIF. When the institution is informed that it has provided sufficient evidence in response to each GIR to justify an evaluation visit, it must pay an additional fee of $500. Both fees are non-refundable.

The staff will not begin an analysis of the PIF unless it is accompanied by these basic documents: catalog(s), handbooks, most recent audited financial statements (not a compilation or review and no older than two years), and certification of legal authorization to operate.

If these required documents are not included with the materials submitted by the institution, the materials and the fee will be returned to the institution without Commission review.

☐ Staff Analysis of the PIF

Commission staff prepare an analysis of the information provided. That analysis is sent to the institution. If staff request additional information, no further steps will be taken until all questions have been resolved.

- ◊ An institution's information will be kept on file for two years from the time of submission; during this time the institution may file revised or corrected materials without paying any additional fees.
- ◊ If two years elapse without resolution of the issues raised by Commission staff, the institution must file a new PIF and pay a new fee, if it wishes to pursue the process.

When the staff analysis shows that the institution has presented sufficient evidence in response to each GIR to justify a visit, the institution is asked to notify the Commission if and when it would like to have an evaluation visit by a team of North Central Consultant-Evaluators.

- ◊ The institution is assigned to a staff liaison.
- ◊ After conferring with that liaison, the institution begins to prepare a Self-Study Report in which it addresses the Criteria for Accreditation.
- ◊ After completion of the Self-Study Report, **which is the formal application for affiliation,** and with determination by staff that the document appears adequate for the evaluation, the evaluation visit will occur. The staff analysis of the PIF is shared with the Evaluation Team scheduled to visit the institution.

The institution must have a visit within two years of completion of the staff analysis or it will need to submit a new PIF for staff review.

Institutions in the PIF process should refrain from making any public statement that might imply a relationship with the North Central Association. The actual judgment of whether an institution meets both the General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for Accreditation or the Candidacy Program is made as a part of the evaluation process that includes an evaluation visit, review by a Review Committee, and Commission action. An institution providing information does not commit itself to an evaluation by the Commission, nor does the institution establish any affiliation with the Commission until Commission action is taken to grant candidacy or accreditation.

OVERVIEW OF THE CANDIDACY PROGRAM

Both the initial candidacy process and the initial accreditation process begin with an evaluation visit by a team of Consultant-Evaluators. The judgment of whether an institution meets the General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for Accreditation is made at the conclusion of a three-step evaluation process involving a team visit, review of the Team Report and the institution's self-study materials by a Review Committee, and Commission action on the recommendations of both the Evaluation Team and the Review Committee. For institutions seeking initial candidacy, the self-study process, followed by on-site evaluation, is repeated biennially until accreditation is achieved or candidacy is withdrawn. These successive biennial visits determine the institution's progress toward meeting each criterion by reviewing the emerging pattern of evidence presented by the institution at two-year intervals.

The Commission recognizes that some institutions, when they begin their candidacy, will be further along than others in their ability to fulfill each criterion. It is possible that an institution can provide a convincing pattern of evidence that it meets three or four of the criteria, but has a sizable challenge in meeting others. It is unlikely, however, that an institution seeking candidacy status will be able to achieve accreditation within a six-year candidacy period if it does not meet any of the criteria initially. **The maximum length of candidacy is six years. Attainment of candidacy does not automatically assure eventual accreditation.**

Expectations for All Candidate Institutions

In August 7, 1992, the Commission approved a new candidacy program. In defining that program, the Commission made explicit the following expectations for all candidate institutions.

An applying institution will be measured against the Criteria for Accreditation. An institution seeking candidacy will document through its self-study the degree to which it meets each of the five Criteria, and **through a carefully articulated plan and timetable** will show how it will meet fully each of them within the six year period of candidacy.

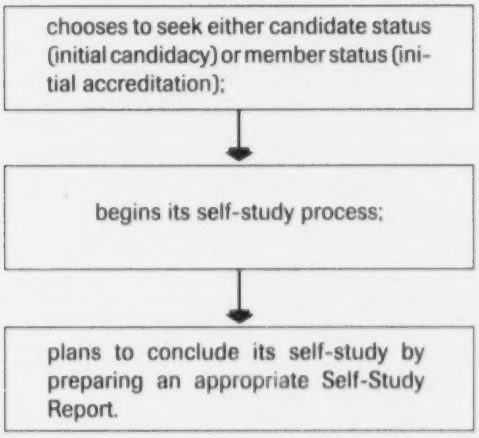
To achieve candidacy an institution will be expected to provide an emerging pattern of evidence for each criterion. In evaluating those patterns of evidence, the Commission will judge

- the **basic institutional structure and strength** as documented in the General Institutional Requirements,
- the **forthrightness and integrity** of the institution's self-study, and
- the **potential** of the institution to fulfill its plan and **achieve accreditation within six years.**

☐ Deciding between Initial Candidacy and Initial Accreditation

The Executive Director advises the institution of the results of the PIF process. An institution may be asked to send more information or to clarify the information it already submitted. The Executive Director will inform an

institution when staff have concluded that an evaluation visit is warranted. The institution then notifies the staff liaison assigned to it when it would like to have an evaluation visit by a team of Consultant-Evaluators. At this point the institution


chooses to seek either candidate status (initial candidacy) or member status (initial accreditation);
begins its self-study process;
plans to conclude its self-study by preparing an appropriate Self-Study Report.

Although an applying institution can choose to seek either candidacy or accreditation status, most request initial candidacy. Institutions that are just getting started and have yet to graduate a class have no choice but to seek initial candidacy. Older institutions that have already graduated students face the choice. Through experience the Commission has learned that many institutions, even those that have been operating for years, are best served through the candidacy program, even if it requires fewer than six years. The decision should be made in consultation with the Commission staff liaison. If during the self-study process an institution determines that it should seek initial accreditation instead of initial candidacy, it may change its request. Different institutions will approach this decision in different ways.

Some examples:

- Initial candidacy might be sought by a technical-vocational college that recently has been granted authority to award the associate of applied science degree. This type of institution typically needs time to develop appropriately credentialed faculty and significant faculty involvement in developing and evaluating a coherent general education program.

- Initial candidacy might be sought by a bible college or a free-standing professional school that is evolving into a broad-based institution. These types of institutions typically require time to respond to such issues as governance, funding, general education, faculty credentials, and student academic and support services.

- Initial accreditation might be sought by a theological seminary that has a long history and has for many years been accredited by the Association of Theological Schools.

- Initial accreditation might be sought by a branch of an accredited university that the legislature has decided to make into a free-standing institution.

Institutions that choose to seek initial accreditation should refer to other chapters concerning institutional self-study. Those choosing to participate in the candidacy program will find specific assistance in the following pages.

☐ Commission Meaning of "Basic Institutional Structure and Strength"

Every institution has a structure created by its organizational arrangements and policy documents that support its existence and operations. The Commission analyzes the evidence the candidate institution gives to show that it meets each General Institutional Requirement (GIR) to determine whether the institution's basic structure is sound and whether the institution meets both the letter and spirit of the GIRs.

In using the words *"basic institutional structure and strength,"* the Commission tells institutions and Evaluation Teams that difficult and important judgments must be made even in reviewing how well the institution meets the GIRs. The GIRs are so basic to the Commission's definition of its appropriate universe of institutions that the Commission is unwilling to accept even for initial candidacy the institution that only "marginally meets" some of the GIRs.

☐ Commission Meaning of "Forthrightness and Integrity"

Value-laden words like *forthrightness* and *integrity* present unique challenges for the institution and the Evaluation Team. Because the Commission takes seriously its mission of helping institutions of higher education improve, it takes seriously the importance of the institutional self-study process. Good practice dictates the following about the self-study process:

- ◇ that it be a formal, comprehensive self-examination that involves members from all internal constituencies;
- ◇ that it assists the institution in improving all aspects of itself;
- ◇ that it prepares the institution to be considered by peers for initial candidacy, continued candidacy, or initial accreditation status.

The Commission will assess whether the institution has described fully and candidly the self-study process. It will also determine the reliability of the institution's Self-Study Report, whether it accurately portrays the current state of the institution, whether it is useful as an investigative and evaluative document, and whether the plan and timetable for meeting the Criteria for Accreditation is reasonable.

☐ Commission Expectations of the Institution's Potential "to Fulfill Its Plan"

The Commission does not prescribe a specific format for presenting either the institution's plan or its timetable for meeting all of the criteria. It does, however, expect institutions applying for initial or continuing candidacy status to include a clearly identified plan and timetable as sections of the Self-Study Report. The validity of the plan rests in part on the adequacy of the institution's self-evaluation of its current strengths and its current capacity to meet each criterion.

- ◇ The plan should state the steps necessary to move the institution from its present condition to meeting each criterion fully.
- ◇ The plan should identify the individual and/or group within the institution that will assume responsibility for carrying out that step.
- ◇ The plan should offer a realistic assessment of how much time will be required to complete the step and what other steps, if any, will have to have taken place before the next one can begin.
- ◇ The plan should identify the resources necessary to carry out the step.

Either the plan will begin to take shape through the self-study process or those who craft the Self-Study Report should be able to assemble a plan. Some institutions have found that year-end reports measuring each year's progress toward fulfilling each of the criteria are useful in preparing the biennial self-studies they must submit during the six-year candidacy period, or until they have been granted member status, whichever comes first.

☐ Commission Expectations of a "Timetable"

The Commission requires that the institution demonstrate in its Self-Study Report not only the steps it intends to take to meet fully each of the five criteria, but also when it expects to begin and conclude each step so that the criteria will be met within the designated period. The timetable is a schematic representation of the steps the institution will take to fulfill all five criteria. It covers the total number of years the institution expects to take to achieve accreditation. The timetable might include specified target dates for all its steps, thus providing guidance both to the institution and a measuring stick of institutional progress for the Evaluation Team. The plan also becomes an important factor in biennial visits as teams continue to monitor how well the institution is living up to its expectations.

☐ Institutional Preparation of the Self-Study Report

An institution's initial self-study process concludes in its preparation of a document known as the Self-Study Report. The report demonstrates, and the Evaluation Team will verify, that each of the General Institutional Requirements (GIRs) has been met. Since the GIRs are "threshold" requirements, initial or continuing status will not be awarded unless the institution has provided explicit evidence documenting its compliance with each of these basic requirements.

The Self-Study Report demonstrates the *degree* to which the institution meets each of the five Criteria for Accreditation. For initial candidacy, a few institutions will have greater challenges than others in providing a convincing pattern of evidence that at least some of the criteria are already met.

At two-year intervals, throughout the candidacy period, the institution must continue to document the extent to which it meets each criterion. Determination of initial and continued candidacy will rest on the ability of the institution to develop, articulate, and implement a plan and timetable to satisfy each criterion within the candidacy period.

An applying institution's Self-Study Report should

- provide explicit evidence that it continues to meet all of the GIRs;
- describe its self-study process;
- present and evaluate emerging patterns of evidence it has identified to support its claim that it will meet the criteria within the candidacy period;
- include a carefully articulated plan and a reasonable timetable for completing the work that remains in order to meet the criteria fully.

☐ Relationship of the Plan and Timetable to the Biennial Review Process

After receiving initial candidacy, the institution proceeds to implement the plan and timetable it provided to the Evaluation Team. Inevitably, institutions will need to modify or adjust that plan to accommodate modifications suggested by the Evaluation Team and/or to respond to unanticipated and changing circumstances. In the second year after it has been granted initial candidacy status, the institution reviews its original Self-Study Report and revises and updates each section according to its changed circumstances. That first biennial visit not only becomes a test of the institution's progress, but also becomes a test of an institution's capacity to plan and to follow through on its plans. Each subsequent Self-Study Report will

- ◊ reexamine how well the institution does or does not meet each criterion;

- ◊ describe and evaluate the progress made to date in the previous Evaluation Team's concerns and recommendations;
- ◊ add to its documentation of emerging patterns of evidence for all criteria; and
- ◊ point out any new strengths or challenges that will affect the original estimate of resources and time required to complete the steps to be taken before the institution will meet each criterion.

The process by which the institution gathers and analyzes all the above information, revises and updates its original plan and timetable, reconsiders the General Institutional Requirements, and assures that it still meets all of them, is the self-study that should precede the biennial review for continued candidacy status.

If the institution is granted continuing candidacy status, it proceeds to implement the revised plan and timetable it submitted as part of its Self-Study Report. The cycle may be repeated two additional times after the first request for continuing candidacy status (up to the maximum six years). However, if the institution believes it meets the five criteria before the end of any two-year period and that it can provide patterns of evidence sufficient to support that assertion, it may request an evaluation for initial accreditation.

☐ Commission Meaning of "Emerging Pattern of Evidence"

By developing and carrying out a carefully articulated plan and timetable, the institution is likely to accrue the materials it needs to demonstrate that an emerging pattern of evidence for each criterion exists and is evolving. In its candidacy program, the Commission expects that the extent to which a fully developed pattern of evidence for each criterion has emerged will be a function of time. Institutions applying for initial candidacy are likely to have made progress in establishing the pattern of evidence required for several of the criteria. They might choose to use the lists of indicators that follow each criterion to assist them in describing and evaluating their pattern of evidence. As the institution progresses through continued candidacy, it will determine what other indicators, besides those listed for each criterion, are unique to its mission and purposes and what evidence, in what combination, it will present and to demonstrate emerging patterns of evidence for each criterion. With each successive self-study during the period of continued candidacy, the institution may provide additional components that will contribute to an emerging pattern of evidence.

By the time the candidate institution is prepared to request initial accreditation, it will have implemented fully its successive plans and timetables. Also, in the Self-Study Report it submits with its application for member status, it will respond to the specific concerns of all previous Evaluation Teams and Review Committees and document that it meets both the General Institutional Requirements and all five Criteria for Accreditation.

☐ The Team Report in the Candidacy Program

A team of Consultant-Evaluators makes an evaluation visit to an institution as the first of the three-part process of considering whether or not to grant or to continue candidacy status to an institution. Whether the request is for initial candidacy or for the first or second continuation of candidacy, the Evaluation Team must review and evaluate the Self-Study Report, both narrative and supporting documentation, giving particular scrutiny to the modifications by the institution in its plan and timetable as a result of its accomplishments and/or changed circumstances during the preceding two years.

Team Reports for ***initial candidacy*** must make the case that

- ◊ the General Institutional Requirements are met;
- ◊ the institution has engaged in a useful and productive self-study process; and

- ◇ the Self-Study Report
  - ○ is an evaluative document,
  - ○ contains a carefully articulated plan and timetable, and
  - ○ documents the degree to which the institution meets the five Criteria for Accreditation.

Team Reports for ***continued candidacy,*** in addition to the above, will

- ◇ provide evidence of progressive development and improvement at the institution and
- ◇ evaluate how the institution has responded to the concerns and recommendations provided by the previous Evaluation Teams and Review Committees.

While the Commission does not grant candidacy to an institution unless it has strong evidence that the institution can achieve accreditation within the candidacy period, it cannot guarantee that institutions will in fact achieve the goals they set for themselves.

Throughout the candidacy period, therefore, the Evaluation Teams must evaluate and their reports address whether the institution is evolving patterns of evidence needed to achieve accreditation before the end of the candidacy period. If the institution must modify its plans, or if it fails to fulfill some of its plans, then the Evaluation Team bears the responsibility of determining whether continued candidacy is appropriate.

14 Special Focus: Assessing Student Academic Achievement

THE COMMISSION'S ASSESSMENT INITIATIVE

In October 1989, the Commission began its initiative on documenting student academic achievement. In August 1993, after four years of implementing and revising the expectations stated in 1989, the Commission adopted the following revised statement.

Commission Statement on Assessment of Student Academic Achievement

In October 1989 the Commission called on all of its affiliated institutions to develop institutional programs through which student academic achievement could be documented. The Commission reaffirmed its long-standing expectation that evaluation of overall institutional effectiveness was critical to the accreditation process: institutional Self-Study Reports and Team Reports would continue to require evidence that an institution accomplishes its purposes. But with the 1989 action, the Commission made explicit that student academic achievement is a critical component in assessing overall institutional effectiveness.

Although the Commission implemented new programs to assist institutions in meeting this expectation, it did not then, nor does it now, prescribe a specific methodology for assessment. In fact, it calls on an institution to structure an assessment plan and program around the institution's stated mission and purposes. Moreover, since 1989 institutions, evaluation teams, Commission staff, and other organizations have engaged in a shared learning process. They have created for the Commission a richly textured understanding of the importance of assessment of student academic achievement and its potential impact on strengthening the teaching provided by institutions and the learning achieved by their students—undergraduate, graduate, and professional.

At this point in this continuing learning process, the Commission reaffirms its objective in this assessment initiative: to encourage in its institutions excellence in the teaching provided for students and in the learning achieved by them. While it is important that an institution respond fully and accurately to a variety of public demands for accountability, an institutional program for assessing student learning should emerge from a faculty and administrative commitment to excellent teaching and effective learning. To fulfill that commitment, assessment of student academic achievement is mandatory, for only by knowing what works and what does not can a professor, a department, a school, or an institution create and carry out plans for continuous educational improvement.

The newly revised Criteria for Accreditation capture the impact of assessment of student academic achievement within the third and fourth criteria: "The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes" and "The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness." Not only must an institution have a plan and program for assessing student academic achievement, but also that plan and program should be related to other institutional strategic and long-range plans and planning processes. It is important to note that the third and fourth criteria also address overall institutional effectiveness, including assessment of student academic achievement. Evaluation of institutional effectiveness, like assessment of student academic achievement, calls for a program that provides consistent information to assist the institution in making useful decisions about the improvement of the institution and in developing plans for that improvement.

Approved by the Commission on Institutions
of Higher Education, August 1993

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The new Statement presents a philosophical foundation for the Commission's mandate on student academic achievement and defines its relationship to the Commission's requirement in the recently revised Criteria Three and Four on documenting institutional effectiveness. It replaces the 1989 Statement.

The revised Statement sets the record straight by clarifying any confusion that the Commission is interested only in assessing student academic achievement and not overall institutional effectiveness. Both institutional effectiveness and assessment of student academic achievement are to be addressed in response to the Criteria for Accreditation. However, the Commission's ongoing assessment initiative, begun with the adoption of the earlier Statement in 1989, places a specific requirement on all institutions to have a plan for implementing a program to assess student academic achievement.

With this Statement, the Commission declared unambiguously that the goal of this initiative was to stimulate in its affiliated institutions "excellent teaching and effective learning."

☐ How the Assessment Initiative Relates to the Criteria for Accreditation

At no time has the Commission suggested that after 1989 decisions about accreditation would rest largely on how effectively an institution responds to this assessment initiative. Instead, it has endeavored to make clear the context of the initiative within the much broader compass of the Criteria for Accreditation. The newly-revised Criteria for Accreditation capture the impact of assessment of student academic achievement within the third and fourth criteria: "The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes" and "The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness."

The third and fourth criteria address overall institutional effectiveness, not just assessment of student academic achievement. Evaluation of institutional effectiveness, like assessment of student academic achievement, calls for a program that provides consistent information to assist the institution in making useful decisions about the improvement of the institution and in developing plans for that improvement. Therefore, the Commission's assessment initiative, is an integral part of the accrediting processes, but decisions about granting and continuing accreditation will not depend solely on effective assessment or on the existence of an elegant plan for assessment. However, the institution's relationship with the Commission will be shaped by both, for the Commission's commitment to the importance of assessment means that it will prod and push its institutions to respond in a timely and thoughtful way.

☐ Hallmarks of Successful Programs to Assess Student Academic Achievement

Early in its initiative, the Commission identified characteristics of an effective program to assess student academic achievement. Other organizations such as the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) have developed other similar lists of characteristics. The overlap among all of the lists is striking. Everyone who has worked with assessment comes to understand that success depends on some very basic common denominators. There is no orthodoxy established by these hallmarks, no prototypical assessment program to be followed by all institutions. Undergirding all hallmarks—either these or those proposed by others—is the tenet that the shape and content of an assessment program rests with the institution's mission and educational purposes and is shaped by the institution's constituencies.

- ◇ **Successful assessment flows from the institution's mission and educational purposes.** Central to the existence of every institution of higher education is the intention to educate students, to ensure their academic growth and attainment, and to certify other levels of accomplishment publicly through awarding credits and diplomas. Each institution expresses this central aspect of its mission and purposes in language that recognizes the particular characteristics that distinguish it from its peers: its origin and tradition, the types of students it serves, the kinds of education and professional training it seeks to provide those students, and its philosophy

of learning. It is this specific formulation of mission and purposes that will determine what the appropriate assessment program will be, and how the results of that program will be utilized to provide evidence of students' academic achievement and to enable the institution to use the results of such assessment to improve its educational programs and instruction and thus further enhance student learning. This characteristic, therefore, directly links assessment to Criterion One.

◊ **Successful assessment emerges from a conceptual framework.** The conceptual framework describes what the institution understands to be the relationships of the kinds of skills, competencies, and knowledge it expects its students to gain, the curricula it offers, the modes of teaching and learning it stresses, the means of assessment it employs, and the ways in which the results of assessment are to be used to improve student learning.

One benefit of developing a conceptual framework is that the process itself provides an invaluable opportunity for faculty and administrators to examine and reconsider the expectations they have for themselves and their students and to probe relationships between and among educational purposes, student academic achievement, contributions of resources to this achievement, and future directions to ensure continued achievement.

◊ **Successful assessment is marked by faculty ownership and responsibility.** Given the historic responsibility of faculty in determining credit, certificate and degree requirements, the content of courses, and what is to be accepted as evidence that a student's accomplishment has met established standards, it is self-evident that the faculty must assume primary responsibility for the design, implementation, and evaluation of any program to assess student academic achievement. This in no way precludes participation by academic administrators or the use of consultants whose research or experience would enable them to serve as helpful resources. The means by which faculty carry out their responsibility for the design and implementation of an assessment program will, of course, depend upon the organization of the faculty and the form of governance in place within the institution.

◊ **Successful assessment has institution-wide support.** Board members, the executive officer, the chief academic officer, all other administrators and staff, and the faculty should be informed and in basic agreement about the nature and importance of ongoing assessment of student academic achievement.

◊ **Successful assessment relies on multiple measures.** Because of the variety of components that are required to provide a full description of student academic achievement and the importance of assessing whether achievement at various stages in the student's academic experiences constitutes appropriate progress, it is essential that the assessment program employ multiple measures. No one instrument is sufficiently complex to capture the range of student achievement necessary for the institution to make a judgment regarding how well it is fulfilling its purposes in this area. It is therefore important that the institution use a variety of measures in seeking ways to improve student learning. Taken together, the results of these diverse means of assessment provide the major information that should be integrated into the institution's review and planning processes to improve its educational programs.

◊ **Successful assessment provides feedback to students and the institution.** For student achievement assessment to be valuable to an institution, the results of the various types of assessment should be incorporated into appropriate levels of planning and resource allocation so that the weaknesses identified through assessment can be corrected and the strengths revealed by the process can be maintained.

Individual students have been found to profit from timely and specific information about the quality of their present performance in relation to their own past performance. Feedback is a spur to improved learning. Care should be taken, therefore, to ensure that among the multiple

measures used, some provide students with information relevant to improving individual academic performance.

◇ **Successful assessment is cost-effective.** In the climate of financial austerity in which most institutions of higher learning are now functioning, it is important that available monetary and human resources be prudently and effectively deployed. The assessment program should be designed to seek information directly relevant to institutional improvement and to obtain that information at a reasonable cost in time and money.

As the assessment program is itself evaluated on a recurrent basis, the institution should examine whether its expenditures for gathering various types of information and for analyzing and interpreting the results of the multiple measures of achievement are sound and judicious.

◇ **Successful assessment does not restrict or inhibit goals of access, equity, and diversity established by the institution.** If an institution develops a conceptual framework for its student achievement assessment program based directly upon its mission and purposes, the resultant means of assessment are likely to be appropriate to the particular student body it serves and in harmony with its institutional goals pertaining to access, equity and diversity. If, however, a limited view of what constitutes appropriate measures of achievement becomes dominant, important values that have traditionally guided the institution may be seriously weakened. Therefore, it is essential that the institution keep its values and purposes clearly in mind when deciding how best to measure student achievement.

◇ **Successful assessment leads to improvement.** North Central views assessment of student academic achievement, and all concurrent and related evaluations of curriculum, teaching, and instructional support services and facilities, as a means to increasing students' learning. Since neither the process of assessment nor knowledge of the results of assessment automatically leads to constructive change and improvement, institutions need to incorporate into their regular planning process the requirement that faculty and administrators specify the actions they will take in response to the results of the assessment of student achievement when improvement is called for. The planning process also needs to make explicit that the institution will evaluate whether the steps proposed to improve student achievement have indeed resulted in the desired improvement. That faculty and administrators are using the information provided by the assessment program to make plans, set timetables, and allocate resources, is, in the judgment of North Central, critical.

◇ **Successful assessment includes a process for evaluating the assessment program.** Like other programs in the institution, the assessment program itself needs to be evaluated. An evaluation process will determine whether the conceptual framework is sound, whether all components are appropriate to the institution's mission and purposes, whether the data gathered are being used for the intended purposes, and whether the primary goal of the program—the improvement of educational programs and the enhancement of student academic achievement—is being attained. Only through comprehensive evaluation can the institution determine what adaptations need to be made in its assessment program to ensure its greater effectiveness.

□ Timetable for Implementation of the Assessment Initiative

When it began the Assessment Initiative, the Commission established a specific timetable whereby all affiliated institutions will have their plans reviewed either through already scheduled evaluation visits or through the assessment plan review (APR) process. The current timetable is as follows. Institutions that have questions about this timetable should call the Commission office.

- For institutions that have a comprehensive or Commission-mandated focused evaluation scheduled for 1994-95:
  - The team will review the institution's assessment plan submitted with the Self-Study or Focused Report.
- For institutions that completed a comprehensive evaluation by the Commission between Fall 1991 and Spring 1994 or a Commission-mandated focused visit between Fall 1992 and Spring 1994:
  - The team reviewed the institution's progress in responding to the Commission's assessment initiative at the time of the visit. Please refer to the Commission action letter to determine whether any follow-up monitoring (typically a report or focused visit) was required.

    Institutions that recently had or will have a focused visit for consideration of a proposed institutional change should check with their staff person to determine whether assessment was or will be included in the scope of the visit.
- For institutions that are not in either of these two categories (almost half of all affiliates):
  - An assessment plan is due in the Commission office by June 30, 1995. The plan should respond to the expectations outlined in the section that follows. The plan will be reviewed by an Assessment Plan Review panel that will determine whether further development is needed before the plan is found to meet the Commission's requirements. A small number of plans have been reviewed through this process.

  An institution that fails to file a plan with the Commission by June 30, 1995, will be scheduled for a focused visit.

☐ Why the Commission Emphasizes the Assessment Plan

The ultimate goal of the Commission's initiative on assessment of student academic achievement is to ensure that all of its affiliated institutions have a program for assessment of student academic achievement that is defined by and implemented through an assessment plan. However, we are learning that the link between development of a plan and implementation of a program is not always as linear as one might expect.

Some examples:

- Some institutions, especially those that approach assessment of student academic achievement in a decentralized manner, might have components of a good assessment program before the institutional plan is created.
- Some institutions might have focused attention on developing an overall institutional plan for assessment of student academic achievement, but significant components of the institution have yet to fulfill their parts of the plan.

Through visits reviewed to date, the Commission has determined that unless institutionalized through a formal institutional assessment plan, assessment of student academic achievement will not become part of the institution's basic educational culture even if it might pervade the culture of some departments or schools within the institution. Therefore, the importance of the assessment plan for all institutions is clear.

A formal plan for assessment of student academic achievement must be developed and included in its entirety either in the body of the Self-Study Report or in an appendix to that report for all institutions undergoing comprehensive visits or Commission-mandated focused visits before June 1995.

☐ Five Evaluative Questions for Assessment Plans

The Commission has developed the following five evaluative questions for use by Evaluation Teams and Assessment Plan Review process members in reviewing plans to assess student academic achievement. As the institution develops and analyzes its plan to assess student academic achievement, it will be well-served by measuring its plan against these questions. Discussion of the various issues was provided in the section on Hallmarks of an Assessment Plan.

1. To what extent has the institution demonstrated that the plan is linked to the mission, goals, and objectives of the institution for student learning and academic achievement, including learning in general education and in the major?

2. What is the institution's evidence that faculty have participated in the development of the institution's plan and that the plan is institution-wide in conceptualization and scope?

3. How does the plan demonstrate the likelihood that the assessment program will lead to institutional improvement when it is implemented?

4. Is the time line for the assessment program appropriate? Realistic?

5. What is the evidence that the plan provides for appropriate administration of the assessment program?

THE ASSESSMENT PLAN REVIEW PROCESS

The Commission established an Assessment Plan Review process (APR) to review the plans submitted by institutions required to file plans by June 30, 1995. The members of the APR panels were drawn from the Consultant-Evaluator Corps and were trained by the Commission.

☐ Format Requirements for the Written Plan to be Submitted to the APR Process

The Commission has reviewed a number of plans through the APR process. Based on these early experiences, staff have developed the following requirements for all future submissions of assessment plans:

- ◇ **Include an executive summary.** Regardless of how the material is organized, each plan should include an executive summary that explicitly addresses the five evaluative questions on assessment plans. This summary is particularly important for institutions that are submitting plans that were written in response to assessment requirements of other bodies, such as state agencies.

  The executive summary should include a cover sheet that provides a profile of the institution.

- ◇ **Keep the plan document clear and concise.** While the Commission has not established minimum or maximum page limits on plans, remember to keep plans succinct. It is not necessary, for example, to include detailed information on how each department will do assessment. It is useful to provide information that briefly and accurately summarizes how various departments have approached assessment.

- ◇ **Send four copies of the plan and the executive summary to the Commission office.** These copies are for use by the Assessment Plan Review panel members and the Commission staff.

EVALUATION TEAM REVIEW OF THE ASSESSMENT PLAN

Institutions scheduled for comprehensive or Commission-mandated focused evaluations in 1994-95 will have their plans to assess student academic achievement reviewed by the Evaluation Team. Future teams will monitor the institution's continuing progress in developing its plan and in implementing its program.

☐ How Teams Respond to an Institution's Progress on Assessment

The Commission has emphasized frequently and prominently that there is no uniform program to assess student academic achievement that all institutions must follow. Assessing student academic achievement is a complicated task; the Commission prescribes no single methodology or instrumentation for institutions to carry it out. On the contrary, the Commission hopes that institutions will use the requirement as an opportunity to experiment carefully and learn, to identify those aspects of student development and academic achievement they value, and to formulate and test their assessment plans in ways that will allow them to collect information on which they can act to make the teaching they provide and the learning of their students more effective.

If the institution	Then the team
has a plan that appears to be well-supported by a wide variety of its constituents and if there is reasonable evidence to suggest that the institution will successfully implement (or is already successfully implementing) the plan,	will comment on the assessment plan and program in the Team Report and state clearly that the institution has met the Commission's expectations for assessment.
has an inadequate assessment plan, even if it has some praiseworthy pockets of assessment on campus,	must call for the submission, by a specific date, of a revised and appropriate plan for the total institution.
has an appropriate plan, but is facing challenges in implementing it,	must weigh whether further Commission monitoring will be of use to the institution. [Required reports might well encourage the institution to focus on the implementation; a focused visit may help to break resistance that is blocking progress.]
appears to be ignoring the initiative,	will call either for a monitoring report or a focused visit, depending on which might be the most effective approach to prompt institutional action. [In unique situations, the team might consider moving forward the date of the next comprehensive evaluation.]
is seeking initial status, either candidacy or accreditation,	while not resting its decision solely on the institution's progress with assessment, will include within its judgment the strength of the institution's commitment to assessment. [Basic decisions about status will never be based solely on the institution's assessment program.]

In all situations, teams will consult and advise, offering support and encouragement to institutions as they strive, in their unique situations, to build assessment programs of value, effectiveness, and longevity.

15 Informing the Public

THE COMMISSION'S EXPANDING VIEW OF PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

Demands on the Commission for greater public disclosure of information on its processes in general and on individual affiliated institutions in particular have increased in recent years. Some of these demands have come from the federal government in the form of new pressures for access to information from the Commission's evaluation processes. The Commission is responding to these demands in several significant ways, particularly through the development and publication of the Record of Status and Scope (see Chapter 2). It is increasing its efforts to communicate in a timely and useful manner with other agencies such as the Department of Education and state higher education organizations. It continues to refine the *Briefing* newsletter and the *Overview* brochure so that both provide useful information about the Commission's activities to a variety of constituents. It has developed Public Disclosure Notices that give information about individual situations.

In addition, the Commission has strengthened its concerns about public disclosure practices on the part of affiliated institutions by revising both its General Institutional Requirements and Criteria for Accreditation in this area. Advertising, recruiting, publication of affiliation, use of Team Reports, and reporting of Commission actions are among the important institutional obligations related to the public identified by the Commission. Although the Commission has taken some important steps in the area of public information, it is clear that issues of public information and public disclosure will continue to be on the Commission's agenda for the next several years.

COMMISSION DISCLOSURE

☐ Publication of Affiliation by the Commission

Each year in the Spring issue of the *NCA Quarterly* the Commission publishes for each of its affiliated institutions a Record of Status and Scope (RSS). The RSS includes the Statement of Affiliation Status most recently approved by the Commission and the Statement of Institutional Scope and Activities created from the most recent Institutional Annual Report. Supplements to the *NCA Quarterly* are produced after each Commission meeting at which institutional actions are taken, and each edition of the *Briefing* contains a record of the most recent actions. The Record of Status and Scope for an individual institution is available from the Commission on request. Moreover, Commission staff can provide the most current information via telephone and fax.

Each year the Commission publishes in the *Briefing* a summary of all of the actions it has taken in the previous year.

☐ Sharing Information with Other Agencies

The Commission shares information with other accrediting agencies and with federal and state departments of education. Following each Commission meeting, the Commission office files with these agencies a report of all institutional actions taken. In early Fall, the Commission furnishes state agencies with the list of institutions scheduled for evaluation in that academic year.

While the Commission tries to respond cooperatively to requests for information from other agencies, it is primarily the institution's responsibility to maintain effective communication with these agencies and to provide them with appropriate information concerning its relationship with the North Central Association.

☐ Public Distribution of the Team Report by the Commission

In most cases, the Commission will not make a Team Report public without the permission of the institution. However, the Commission will make the Team Report public if it finds that the institution has misrepresented the contents of the report either through public statements or through the release of selected portions of the report.

☐ Public Disclosure Notice

The Commission may issue a Public Disclosure Notice regarding an affiliated institution when circumstances warrant. This notice will include a history of the institution's relationship with the Commission as well as a brief analysis of the situation that prompted the Notice. An institution may request that a Public Disclosure Notice be made available to the public or the Commission may produce a Public Disclosure Notice that will be available to the public after the institution has reviewed the wording of the Notice.

INSTITUTIONAL DISCLOSURE

☐ Publication of Affiliation by the Institution

The North Central Association is a membership organization whose members are the institutions accredited by a Commission of the Association; thus "member institution" and "accredited institution" are synonymous. Reference to "membership" is limited to accredited institutions; candidate institutions are not "members" of the North Central Association, although they are affiliated with it.

The Commission requires that specific language be used whenever the institution refers to its status with the Commission in catalogs, advertisements, brochures, and other publications.

An institution that is	Should use the following language
unaffiliated	**should make no reference** to affiliation with the Commission until a status has been granted by the Commission.
accredited	*"(Name of Institution) is accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools."* North Central accreditation refers to the institution as a whole. Statements such as "this program is accredited by North Central" or "this degree is accredited by North Central" are incorrect and must not be used. Moreover, the phrases "fully accredited" or "full accreditation" must not be used, since no partial accreditation is possible.
a candidate for accreditation	*"(Name of Institution) is a candidate for accreditation with the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools."*
on Probation **must disclose this sanction whenever it refers to its NCA accreditation.**	*"(Name of Institution) is accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The institution is on Probation as of (date of Probation action.)"*

An institution may disclose its Statement of Affiliation Status as long as it provides the Record of Status and Scope in its entirety. **In no case should an institution use the logo of the North Central Association.**

☐ Institutional Advertising

The Commission's Criteria for Accreditation include a specific criterion addressed to institutional integrity: Criterion Five. Teams expect to find that institutional publications, statements, and advertising describe accurately the institution, its operations, and its programs. If an institution's affiliation status extends to include distant sites, including international operations, the institution is responsible for the advertising and recruitment materials for those sites. This has become especially critical in recent years as institutions develop linkages and enter into contractual agreements through which another party may appear, in advertising, to lay claim to an affiliated institution's status with the Commission.

The Commission has a specific policy addressing its concern about misleading advertising:

> When it is determined that an institution is in violation of the Commission's policy on fair and accurate public disclosure, the Executive Director will first inform the institution and, if the matter is not corrected, will report the violation to the Commission for appropriate action.

☐ Public Distribution of the Team Report by the Institution

The Commission encourages an institution to distribute the entire Team Report and recommendation among all of its constituencies. However, if it distributes the report before the Commission takes action, the institution is to indicate that the Team Report does not constitute a summary of the entire North Central evaluation process; the report of the team that visited the institution is only the first step in the evaluation process. Because the Commission's review processes may result in an accrediting action other than the one the Evaluation recommended, misunderstandings may occur if the preliminary nature of the Team Report is not made clear.

After final Commission action, each institution may make public the entire Team Report or excerpts that are accurate (i.e., verbatim or reasonable paraphrases) and that correctly reflect the entire report. If it distributes excerpts, the institution must make the full report available on request. The Commission will not make the report public without the permission of the institution, unless an institution misrepresents it.

☐ Publication of Commission Action by the Institulton

When the institution reports a Commission action it may simply state that accreditation has been continued. However, if the institution wishes to disclose further details of the action, such as the scheduled year of the next comprehensive evaluation, it should also disclose the other details of the action, including any reports or focused evaluations required as a part of the action.

In addition, phrases such as *"accreditation has been continued for a ten-year period"* should never be used. North Central Association accreditation is not for a specific period of time but is a continuing relationship between the institution and the Association that is subject to reconsideration periodically or when necessary. The timing of the next comprehensive evaluation is subject to alteration if significant changes occur in an institution.

COMPLAINTS AGAINST AFFILIATED INSTITUTIONS

In fulfilling its responsibility to the public, the Commission receives complaints about its affiliated institutions. A Commission policy defines how the Commission will handle all complaints that it receives.

The Commission considers a complaint against an affiliated institution when that complaint provides reasonable evidence that the institution's ability to meet the General Institutional Requirements or Criteria for Accreditation might be in jeopardy. The complainant must provide either a signed letter (which will be kept confidential on request) and/or any other materials relating to the complaint including such public materials as magazine or newspaper articles.

The Commission forwards to the Chief Officer of the institution all information received, except a summary of confidential materials may be provided in lieu of actual documents. The Chief Officer is asked to file a response to complaints that appear to deserve Commission consideration. If the Chief Officer's response effectively deals with the complaint, the Commission considers the matter closed and so informs the complainant and the institution. Responses deemed to be inadequate are reviewed by the Commissioners who may call for an on-site visit to gather further information. The complainant is also informed of this action. Only complaints that prompt review by the Commissioners are entered in the institution's file to be shared with the next visiting team.

The Commission usually does not act on the following complaints: those that are being pursued through other avenues such as institutional grievance processes and state or federal courts; and, those that do not provide reasonable evidence that the institution's ability to meet the General Institutional Requirements or accreditation/candidacy criteria might be in jeopardy. However, the Commission reserves the right to seek all information needed to provide assurance that the affiliated status of an institution is not threatened.

Appendices

Appendix A

Rules of Procedure of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education

☐ **Rule 1: Name and Authority**

This organization shall be known as the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education ("the Commission") of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools ("the Association"). It is established under the Constitution of the Association, and derives its powers from the Constitution. These Rules of Procedure are intended to provide for fulfilling the responsibilities placed on the Commission by the Constitution.

☐ **Rule 2: Composition of the Commission**

a. The Commission shall comprise fifteen persons called Commissioners: three persons representative of the public and twelve persons broadly representative of institutions of higher education that are members of the Association. All Commissioners shall be residents of a state within the geographic territory of the Association. The Commission's representative officer to the Association Board of Directors shall serve as an ex-officio member of the Commission.

b. Each Commissioner who is representative of the public shall have no current active affiliation with an institution of higher education or higher education agency in the geographic territory of the Association.

c. Each Commissioner who is representative of institutions of higher education shall hold a full time position at a member institution of higher education of the Association.

d. Each Commissioner shall serve a term of four years unless the term is extended because of election as an officer of the Commission. Terms shall begin on January 1. Approximately one-fourth of the terms expire each year. A Commissioner shall serve until a successor assumes office.

e. No person shall be appointed or reappointed to a term or a portion of a term as a Commissioner if by completion of that appointment the person will have served more than seven years as a Commissioner. Officers elected by Commissioners shall serve until the completion of their office but not more than eight years. (See Rule 6d.)

☐ **Rule 3: Manner of Action**

a. The Commission may adopt policies as it may deem necessary and convenient to exercise the powers and discharge the duties of the Commission that are specified in the Constitution of the Association.

b. Unless otherwise specified in the Constitution of the Association, these Rules of Procedure, or the policies of the Commission, the Commission itself shall take such actions as are required by the Constitution of the Association, or are necessary for the conduct of Commission business.

Note: The following powers and duties of the Commission are specified in the Constitution of the Association, and are inserted here for reference.

a. *To develop accreditation processes which encourage quality and educational excellence.*

b. *To stimulate improvement of educational programs and effectiveness of instruction, with concern for freedom to teach and learn.*

c. *To establish policies and procedures by which the activities of the Commission shall be carried out, including the selection of officers and committees for the Commission.*

d. *To establish criteria which, when met, entitle educational institutions to receive the status of accreditation, and to establish procedures by which the determination of accreditation is made.*

e. *To establish criteria which, when met, entitle educational institutions to be affiliated with the Association in ways other than membership, and to establish procedures by which the determination of such affiliation is made.*

f. *To use the name of the Association in the conduct of Commission activities and on Commission publications.*

g. *To publish the* NCA Quarterly *as well as books, pamphlets and other materials needed to carry out Commission activities.*

h. *To employ persons in the name of the Association.*

i. *To assess dues and fees to be paid by member and other affiliated institutions, to receive such dues and fees, and after reasonable notice to withdraw accreditation or other affiliation for non-payment of such dues and fees.*

j. *To disburse funds and otherwise manage the financial affairs of the Commission, but the amount expended by a Commission during a year shall not exceed the revenue it receives during that year plus any amount remaining from the operations of previous years.*

c. Adoption of institutional actions must be taken at a Commission meeting and shall require a majority of those present and voting. Adoption of Commission policies must be taken at a Commission meeting and shall require a majority of Commissioners.

d. The Commission may not act to adopt or change any criterion by which the accreditation or other affiliation of an institution is judged until such proposed criteria or changes have been circulated for comment to all institutions affiliated with the Association through the Commission at least one month before the action is taken. Any comment received must be considered by the Commission before action is taken.

☐ **Rule 4: Meetings of the Commission**

a. The Commission shall meet at least twice each year.

b. The Commission shall meet within the geographic territory of the Association at such times and places as the Commission shall designate.

c. Notice of a meeting of the Commission shall be provided to each Commissioner at least sixty days in advance of the meeting, and may be provided to other persons by publication or in response to inquiry. The notice of meeting shall state the time and place of the meeting. In case of an emergency, the Commission may hold a meeting without sixty days advance notice, provided there is unanimous agreement of the Commissioners to waive such notice.

d. Meetings of the Commission shall not be open to the public at large, but the Commission may adopt policies permitting persons not members of the Commission to attend part or all of Commission meetings.

e. The Commission may take action on any matter within its authority by mail ballot or by a conference using telecommunications under such rules as it may prescribe, provided that no action shall be adopted by fewer than ten affirmative votes.

f. Unless otherwise provided in these Rules or the Constitution of the Association, the meetings of the Commission shall be conducted according to *Robert's Rules of Order, Revised.*

☐ **Rule 5: Record of Actions**

a. All actions establishing or modifying the affiliation of an institution with the Association through the Commission shall be transmitted in written form to the designated executive officer of the institution promptly after the action has been taken.

b. The Commission shall cause to be prepared and maintained a permanent record of all its actions, and shall distribute that record or make it available for inspection to representatives of member institutions of higher education of the Association, to the Board of Directors of the Association and to such other persons or groups as the Commission may designate.

☐ **Rule 6: Officers of the Commission**

a. The officers of the Commission shall be a Chair and a Vice Chair.

b. The term of office of each officer shall be two years, beginning on January 1.

c. Officers shall be elected as necessary from among the Commissioners by majority vote of the Commission at least two months before the beginnings of the terms of office.

d. If a person is chosen as an officer, the term of that person as a Commissioner shall, if necessary, automatically be extended until completion of service as an officer, so long as that person meets the requirements for service as a Commissioner.

e. The Chair of the Commission shall preside at all meetings of the Commission, and shall perform other duties required by these Rules or the Constitution of the Association, or customary to the office.

f. The Vice Chair shall perform the duties of the Chair in the absence of the Chair.

g. If the Chair is permanently unable to perform the duties of office, the Vice Chair shall succeed to the office of Chair to complete the unexpired term. In this event a new Vice Chair shall be elected promptly by the Commission to complete the unexpired term of the Vice Chair.

☐ **Rule 7: Executive Committee of the Commission**

a. There shall be an Executive Committee of the Commission which shall have the power to act for the Commission between meetings of the Commission. The powers of the Executive Committee shall be defined in policies adopted by the Commission and shall not contravene the requirements of Rule 3c. All actions of the Executive Committee shall be reported to the Commission at its next meeting.

b. The Executive Committee shall comprise the officers of the Commission and at least two but no more than three other Commissioners elected for one year terms beginning on January 1.

c. Members of the Executive Committee are elected by the Commission at the last scheduled Commission meeting of the calendar year preceeding the start of their terms. Members of the Executive Committee shall serve until their successors assume office.

☐ **Rule 8: Accreditation Review Council**

a. There shall be an Accreditation Review Council which comprises at least 60 individuals.

b. Each Council member shall be a full time active appointee of a member institution of higher education of the Association and a resident of a state within the geographic territory of the Association.

c. The membership of the Accreditation Review Council shall meet the following conditions:

i. There shall be at least two persons resident in each state within the geographic territory of the Association.

ii. There shall be at least fifteen persons from institutions in each of the four degree levels:

- ◇ highest degree less than bachelor's;
- ◇ highest degree bachelor's;
- ◇ highest degree above bachelor's but less than doctor's;
- ◇ highest degree doctor's.

iii. There shall be at least thirty persons from public institutions, and at least thirty persons from private institutions.

d. Approximately one-fourth of the terms shall expire in any one year.

e. No one may serve through appointment and/or reappointment more than six consecutive years as a Council member.

f. Council members shall participate actively in the procedures by which institutions of higher education gain or retain affiliation with the Association. This participation shall be defined in policies adopted by the Commission.

☐ **Rule 9: Standing Committee on Appointments**

a. There shall be a standing Committee on Appointments which shall appoint by majority vote persons to serve as Commissioners and as Accreditation Review Council members.

b. The Committee on Appointments shall comprise seven persons, as follows:

i. Three Commissioners, who shall not be officers of the Commission; and

ii. Four chief executive officers of institutions of higher education that are members of the Association, who shall be neither Commissioners nor Accreditation Review Council members.

c. Members of the Committee on Appointments shall be appointed to one year terms by the Commission at the meeting of the Commission first occurring after January 1, and shall serve until successors have been appointed.

d. The membership of the Committee on Appointments shall meet the following conditions:

i. There shall be at least one person from an institution in each of the four degree levels:

- ◇ highest degree less than bachelor's;
- ◇ highest degree bachelor's;
- ◇ highest degree above bachelor's but less than doctor's;
- ◇ highest degree doctor's.

ii. There shall be at least two members from public institutions, and at least two members from private institutions;

iii. There shall be no more than one member from a single state;

iv. No one shall be appointed to more than one term on the Committee on Appointments within any four year period.

e. Appointments of persons to full terms as Commissioners or as Accreditation Review Council members shall be made by the Committee on Appointments not less than three nor more than six months before the beginning of the respective terms.

f. In the event of vacancies arising among the Commissioners, the Committee on Appointments shall promptly appoint persons to fill the unexpired terms.

Rule 10: Chief Executive Officer

a. The Commission shall appoint a chief executive officer of the Commission, who shall be a full time employee of the Association.

b. The chief executive officer shall have such title as the Commission shall designate, and shall serve such term of office and under such conditions of employment as the Commission shall determine.

c. The chief executive officer shall have primary responsibility for administering the activities of the Commission under the direction of the Commission.

Rule 11: Amendments to the Rules of Procedure

These Rules of Procedure shall be amended by action of the Commission only after the proposed amendment has been circulated for comment to all institutions affiliated with the Association through the Commission at least one month before the action to adopt is taken. Each comment received must be considered by the Commission before action is taken.

Adopted: January 1, 1984
Amended: August 25, 1989

Appendix B

Resources on Topics in Higher Education

The Commission staff has found the books and articles listed below to be helpful for institutions working on self-study and assessment. These readings represent only a small portion of the literature currently available on these topics. Most of the publications listed have bibliographies. Many of the agencies listed under "Selected Organizations and Instruments" also provide helpful literature. Institutions are encouraged to go beyond this list in their investigations to inform themselves thoroughly about these topics as they prepare for evaluation.

☐ Commission Publications

The primary resources for information on self-study and evaluation are the Commission's publications. A list of publications available from the Commission appears in Appendix I.

☐ Selected Self-Study Reports

Representatives of institutions undertaking self-studies often ask for "good examples" from other institutions. A wide variety of Self-Study Reports have been selected for review in the Resource Room during the NCA Annual Meeting. The reports are available for review in the Commission offices between Annual Meetings. Officials of these institutions have agreed to the use of their documents in this way.

☐ Selected Readings of General Interest

The Chronicle of Higher Education is a source of current information on publications and meetings related to evaluation and assessment. (1255 Twenty-Third Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037.)

Cultural Leadership in Higher Education, by Robert Rhoads and William Tierney, presents eight principles of leadership that exemplify a cultural perspective of higher education. (University Park, PA: National Center for Teaching and Learning, 1992.)

A Good Place to Work: Sourcebook for the Academic Workplace, by the Council of Independent Colleges, suggests strategies for maintaining good faculty morale and includes case studies of ten colleges. A companion volume, The Academic Workplace Audit, is a workbook for administrators designed to stimulate discussion and analysis of faculty morale. (Washington, D.C.: Council of Independent Colleges and Schools, 1991.)

How College Affects Students, by E.T. Pascarella and P.T. Terenzini, addresses such issues as theories and models of student change; development of attitudes and values; psychosocial changes; educational attainment and career development; and quality of life after college. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991.)

How to Read a Financial Report, by Merrill Lynch Pierce Fenner & Smith, provides detailed information and illustrations about how to analyze and interpret a corporate financial statement. (Merrill Lynch Pierce Fenner & Smith, Inc., World Financial Center, South Tower, 4th Floor, New York NY 10080-6104, 212/637-7455.)

Liberal Learning and the Arts and Sciences Major: Volume I, The Challenge of Connecting Learning; and *Volume II, Reports from the Fields, Project on Liberal Learning, Study in Depth, and the Arts and Sciences Major* by the

Association of American Colleges, discusses principles and strategies related to faculty responsibility for shaping programs; organizing principles for structuring study-in-depth; processes for integrating learning; and relations between the major and other parts of the curriculum. (Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges, 1991.)

Self-Study Processes: A Guide for Postsecondary Institutions, by H.R. Kells, is designed as a handbook for self-study steering committee members and other participants in accreditation activities. Kells describes the context for and the concept of self-study and suggests general models for self-study. Specific information, checklists and charts are provided for various phases of the self-study process. (Third Edition, ACE Book Series. New York: MacMillan, 1988.)

Starting with Students, edited by Clifford Adelman, presents results of a search for examples of notable programs with promising approaches to problems, practices and goals in higher education. (Washington, DC: National Institute of Education, 1985. Available from ERIC Document Reproduction Services.)

☐ Selected Readings on Assessment of Student Academic Achievement and/or Institutional Effectiveness

Achieving Assessment Goals Using Evaluation Techniques, edited by Peter J. Gray, proposes two alternative futures for assessment–"(1) broadening the definition of assessment to include activities formerly identified with evaluation, program review, and accreditation, or (2) regarding assessment as just one of many techniques for providing data within the context of a more comprehensive process like evaluation." (New Directions for Higher Education, No. 67. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc. 1989.)

Assessing Educational Outcomes, edited by Peter T. Ewell, provides an overview of research on student outcomes, shows how outcomes research programs have been organized and implemented in various settings, and provides some basic technical advice about study design and the communication of study results. (New Directions for Institutional Research. No. 47. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985.)

Assessing Institutional Effectiveness in Community Colleges, by Don Doucette and Billie Hughes, suggests an approach to assessment within the purposes of a community college. (Laguna Hills, CA: League for Innovation, 1991.)

Assessing Institutional Effectiveness–Redirecting the Self-Study Process, by Peter T. Ewell and Robert P. Lisensky, describes how a small group of liberal-arts colleges, interested in designing an assessment program within the context of reaccreditation, integrated institutional goals with assessment and self-study and built permanent mechanisms for analyzing their effectiveness. (Washington, D.C.: The Consortium for the Advancement of Private Higher Education, 1988.)

Assessing Institutional Effectiveness: Issues, Methods and Management, edited by C. Fincher, offers personal and professional perspectives on institutional effectiveness, especially as it relates to public demands for accountability and/or accreditation. (Athens, GA: Institute of Higher Education at the University of Georgia, 1989.)

Assessing Assessment, by Reid Johnson, Joseph Prus, Charles J. Andersen, and Elaine El-Khawas, presents data from the Higher Education Panel's sample of institutions and from the data argues against many basic assumptions about assessment; the authors also offer a nine-step development cycle that evolves into an assessment/report/feedback loop. (Higher Education Panel Report no. 79. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1991.)

Assessment 1990: Understanding the Implications, from the American Association for Higher Education, presents papers given at the 1990 meeting by speakers Patricia Cross, Grant Wiggins, and Pat Hutchings. (Washington, D.C.: AAHE Assessment Forum, 1990.)

Assessment 1990: Accreditation and Renewal, from the American Association for Higher Education, presents papers given at the 1990 meeting by speakers Ralph Wolff and Alexander Astin. (Washington, D.C.: AAHE Assessment Forum, 1990.)

Assessment, Accountability and Improvement: Managing the Contradiction, by Peter T. Ewell, suggests strategies for helping institutions to address growing demands for accountability while at the same time undertaking a serious investigation of institutional effectiveness. (Washington, D.C.: AAHE Assessment Forum, 1987.)

Assessment for Excellence: The Philosophy and Practice of Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, by Alexander W. Astin, is a comprehensive examination of assessment theory and conceptualization and proposes a general assessment model that is used as the framework for the book. (New York: American Council on Education/MacMillan Publishing Company, 1991.)

Assessment in American Higher Education: Issues and Contexts, edited by Clifford Adelman, outlines the basic measurement, organizational, and policy concerns in the current discussion of the theoretical and practical aspects of assessment. (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Research, 1986. Available from ERIC Document Reproduction Services.)

Assessment in Higher Education, second edition, by J. Heywood, is a scholarly treatment of assessment theory and methodology from a scientific and historical perspective concluding with specific recommendations regarding multiple-strategy assessment. Heywood provides a detailed glossary and extensive bibliography. (New York: Wiley, 1989.)

Behind Outcomes: Context Questions for Assessment, by Patricia Hutchings, examines why assessment programs focused solely on outcomes often fail to produce institutional improvement and suggests nine areas of inquiry that stimulate institutions to examine not only the final results of learning but how those results occur. (Washington, D.C.: AAHE Assessment Forum, 1989.)

Benefits and Costs of Assessment in Higher Education: A Framework for Choicemaking, by Peter T. Ewell, deals with the costs and benefits of assessment—fiscal, organizational, and political—and is helpful to administrators charged with making cost-effective decisions about assessment. (Boulder, CO: National Center for Higher Education Management Systems. Also available from ERIC Document Reproduction Services, ED 306 809, 1988.)

Catching Theory Up with Practice: Conceptual Frameworks for Assessment, by Marcia Mentkowski, Alexander Astin, Peter Ewell, E. Thomas Moran and K. Patricia Cross, reports on a conversation about how assessment practice connects with the areas of epistemology, measurement, etc. (Washington, D.C.: AAHE Assessment Forum, 1991.)

College Student Outcomes Assessment: A Talent Development Perspective, by Maryann Jacobi, Alexander Astin, and Frank Ayala, Jr., offers suggestions for implementing a comprehensive program of outcomes assessments. (ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 7, 1987, Publications Department, the George Washington University, One Dupont Circle, Washington, DC 20036.)

The External Examiner Approach to Assessment by Bobby Fong, discusses how American institutions have used external examiners to evaluate learning and contrasts the British model of this method. (Washington, D.C.: AAHE Assessment Forum, 1987.)

Implementing Outcomes Assessment: Promise and Perils, edited by Trudy W. Banta, discusses such issues as implementing assessment, costs and benefits of assessment, and cognitive measures in assessing learning. The publication includes an annotated bibliography of current references and ongoing assessment projects. (New Directions for Institutional Research, No. 59. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1988.)

Performance and Judgment, Essays on Principles and Practices in the Assessment of College Student Learning, edited by Clifford Adelman, examines " psychometric and allied issues in major target curriculum areas of assessment (basic skills, general education, and the major), in emerging assessment methodologies (performance assessment and computer-interactive testing), and in the assessment of major non-cognitive areas of student growth." (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Research, 1986. Available from ERIC Document Reproduction Services.)

Planning for Assessment: Mission Statements, Goals and Objectives, by L. F. Gardiner, compiles current practical ideas on reviewing the institutional mission statement and goals and integrating this review into the plans for assessment. (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey State Department of Higher Education Library, 1989.)

Student Outcomes Assessment: What Institutions Stand to Gain, edited by Diane F. Halpern, addresses a wide variety of topics related to assessment as an educational policy issue, including models of student outcomes assessment and designing assessment programs that work. (New Directions for Higher Education, No. 59. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987.)

Thinking About Assessment: Perspectives for Presidents and Chief Academic Officers, by Jack T. Rossman and Elaine El-Khawas, presents valuable information to senior institutional officers dealing with the assessment question: what the assessment debate is all about; questions officers should consider as they examine assessment; and issues related to choosing an approach to assessment. (Washington, D.C.: ACE/AAHE, June, 1987.)

Time Will Tell: Portfolio Assisted Assessment of General Education, by Aubrey Forrest, documents the conclusions of seven institutions with extensive experience in portfolio-assisted assessment who agreed on five sets of decisions that need to be made in this process and the options associated with each decision. (Washington, D.C.: AAHE Assessment Forum, 1990.)

To Capture the Ineffable: New Forms of Assessment in Higher Education, by Peter T. Ewell in Review of Research in Education, edited by G. Grant, provides a contextual and historical account of assessment, suggesting that assessment operates on two contradictory imperatives: academic improvement and external accountability. Recommendations for future directions in this area are provided. (Washington, D.C.: American Educational Research Association, 1991.)

☐ Assessment Related: General Education

Asheville Institute on General Education, from the Association of American Colleges, reports the results of the 1991 symposium, which focused on providing practical help as well as building wider support for general education programs in history/culture and mathematics/science. (Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges, 1991.)

Defining and Assessing Baccalaureate Skills. Ten Case Studies, from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, describes the efforts of ten institutions to evaluate the general education component of their baccalaureate degrees. (Washington, D.C.: American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 1986.)

Using Assessment to Strengthen General Education, by Patricia Hutchings, Ted Marchese, and Barbara Wright, examines how assessment's questions and approaches can support this central component of undergraduate education. (Washington, D.C.: AAHE Assessment Forum, 1991.)

☐ Assessment Related: Institutional Research and Planning

Developing Effective Policy Analysis in Higher Education, edited by Judith Gill and Laura Saunders, acquaints the institutional researcher with the field of policy analysis and provides examples of policy analysis studies. (New Directions for Institutional Research, no. 76. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1992.)

Organizing Effective Institutional Research Offices, edited by Jennifer Presley, provides practical guidelines for establishing an institutional research function or for invigorating an existing one. (New Directions for Institutional Research, no. 66. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1990.)

Using Research for Strategic Planning, edited by N. P. Uhl, defines strategic planning and discusses the role of the institutional researcher, particularly in assessment, academic program evaluation, and facilities analysis. (New Directions for Institutional Research, Vol. 37. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1983.)

☐ Assessment Related: National and State Initiatives

National Education Goals Report. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1992.)

Time for Results and Educating America: State Strategies for Achieving National Educational Goals, both by the National Governors' Association Center for Policy Research and Analysis. (Washington, D.C.: National Governors' Association Center for Policy Research and Analysis, 1990 & 1991.)

☐ Assessment Related: Teaching and Learning

Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom, by Charles C. Bonwell and James A. Eison, outlines the benefits of active learning and suggests strategies for getting active learning into the classroom. (ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, no. 1, Washington, D.C.: Association for Study of Higher Education, 1991.)

Assessing Faculty Work, by Larry A. Braskamp and John C. Ory, is a practical resource for fostering and assessing faculty achievements in all aspects of their work: teaching, research, practice and citizenship. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992.)

Assessing Student Learning and Development, by Dary T. Erwin, is a practical guide to the key issues involved in developing an assessment program and suggests how to select an existing assessment method and how to design new methods that meet institutional needs. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994.)

Assessing Student Learning in Light of How Students Learn by Joseph D. Novak and Dennis R. Ridley, presents assessment techniques based on a theory of learning. (Washington, D.C.: AAHE Assessment Forum, 1990.)

Assessing Student's Learning, edited by J.H. MacMillan, suggests that assessment is most effective when it begins in the classroom and discusses strategies for assessing specific skills, assessing the major, grading, and the role of faculty judgments in assessing students' prior learning. (New Directions for Teaching and Learning, No. 34. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1988.)

Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for Faculty, by K.P. Cross and Thomas A. Angelo, suggests that traditional measures seldom indicate how well students are learning to think and analyze and presents techniques for measuring subject matter learning, critical thinking improvement, and student assessments of teaching methods. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1993.)

Collaborative Learning: A Sourcebook for Higher Education, by A. Goodsell, M. Maher and V. Tintro, provides definitions, practical implementation, and assessment strategies for collaborative learning. (University Park, PA: National Center for Teaching and Learning, 1991.)

Cooperative Learning: Increasing College Faculty Instructional Productivity by David W. Johnson, Roger T. Johnson, and Karl A. Smith, provides strategies for faculty in structuring cooperative groups for student learning. (ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report no. 4. Washington, D.C.: Association for the Study of Higher Education, 1991.)

Feedback in the Classroom: Making Assessment Matter, by K. Patricia Cross, argues for small-scale assessment conducted continuously in college classrooms as the cornerstone of an institutional assessment program. (Washington, D.C.: AAHE Assessment Forum, 1990.)

☐ Assessment Related: Testing

The Mental Measurements Yearbook is published annually and describes a variety of psychological and cognitive tests, their contents, administration, costs, and availability. Particularly useful are the indexes to tests in specialized areas (e.g., English skills, general intelligence, etc.) prepared by Oscar Buros that are published in a separate volume. (Highland Park, NJ: Gryphon Press.)

Standardized Tests and the Purposes of Assessment, by J.M. Heffernan, P. Hutchings, and T. J. Marchese, examines the use and misuse of standardized tests in assessment. The authors discuss the opportunities and limitations of standardized tests and suggest methods of combining them with other approaches to assessment. (Washington, D.C.: AAHE Assessment Forum, 1988.)

Standards For Educational and Psychological Testing, by the American Psychological Association, provides guidelines for test users on test selection and administration, reliability, validity, scoring and interpreting scores, and dissemination of scores. (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1985.)

☐ Assessment Related: Total Quality Management

Applying the Deming Method to Higher Education, by Richard Miller, outlines the basic principles of TQM. (Washington, D.C.: College and University Personnel Association, 1990.)

Quality. Transforming Postsecondary Education, by Ellen Earle Chafee and Lawrence A. Sherr, discusses the application of TQM to issues of continuous quality improvement on campus. (ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report no. 3. Washington, D.C.: Association for the Study of Higher Education, 1992.)

Total Quality Management in Higher Education, edited by Lawrence A. Sherr and Deborah J. Teeter, examines the basic principles of TQM as used by businesses and addresses implementation steps for postsecondary institutions; the volume also includes two case studies. (New Directions for Institutional Research, no. 71. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1991.)

☐ Selected Organizations and Instruments for Assessment

The American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) has exercised significant leadership in the assessment of educational outcomes. AAHE's Assessment Forum sponsors an annual national conference, publishes assessment literature and provides networking and consulting services. AAHE also publishes *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, which provides in-depth articles on issues of national interest in higher education. (AAHE Assessment Forum, One Dupont Circle, Suite 600, Washington DC 20036, 202/293-6440.)

The American Council on Education (ACE) publishes an annual survey, *Campus Trends*, which describes trends in such areas as enrollment, faculty hiring, curriculum change, assessment, and changing demands on college expenditures. In addition to this survey, ACE publishes other educational surveys and articles that may be helpful to institutions. (American Council on Education, One Dupont Circle, Washington DC 20036-1193, 202/939-9450.)

The American College Testing Program (ACT) offers a number of instruments designed to assist institutions conducting self-studies, program evaluation, outcomes assessment, and institutional planning. The Evaluation Survey Service (ESS) provides several postsecondary survey instruments for administration to entering,

enrolled, and former students. The College Outcomes Measures Program (COMP) measures three content areas: social institutions, science and technology, and the arts; and three skills areas: communications, solving problems, and clarifying values. The Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) measures students' academic skills in several critical areas. (The American College Testing Program, PO Box 168, Iowa City IA 52243. 319/337-1408.)

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) is an organization that promotes liberal learning through grants, publications, workshops and conferences. It focuses on improving the quality of the undergraduate educational experience for all students. AAC publishes Liberal Education, which has included over the years specific articles on outcomes assessment and other areas related to evaluation. (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 1818 R Street, NW, Washington DC 20009, 202/387-3760.)

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) provides materials and assistance to institutions interested in developing expertise in the assessment of adult and experiential learning. *Assessing Learning–Standards, Principles, and Procedures*, by Urban Whitaker, provides a set of written materials on assessing learning and competence. This publication moves beyond the earlier CAEL literature on assessment, Warren Willingham's *Principles of Good Practice in Assessing Experiential Learning*, 1977, to offer academic and administrative standards for quality assurance in assessing learning for credit. The 1989 publication offers principles and procedures for assessing sponsored learning and prior experiential learning. It also identifies administrative measures to safeguard quality assurance and highlights misconceptions and varieties of malpractice related to assessing learning. Appendices include checklists. CAEL also publishes *Assessing Learning: A CAEL Handbook for Faculty*, by Susan Simosko and *Portfolio Development and Adult Learning*, by Allan Mandel and Elana Michelson, which provides model approaches for teaching the course for portfolio development. (Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, 223 West Jackson, Suite 510, Chicago IL 60606, 312/922-5909.)

Educational Testing Service (ETS) has a broad range of tests, instruments, and questionnaires for outcomes assessment, program review, institutional self-study, planning, and faculty evaluation. These include: Major Field Tests for assessment in the major; Educational Assessment Series for general education; Tests in English composition and mathematics; Goals Inventories for institutional planning; Program Self-Assessment Service for program and department reviews; Student Instructional Report for faculty development and student evaluation of courses. The Academic Profile for assessing general education measures three content areas: social science, natural science, and the humanities; and four skills areas: reading, writing, critical thinking and mathematical data. (Educational Testing Service, College and University Programs, Princeton NJ 08541-0001, 609/921-9000.)

The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) offers a number of products and services that may be useful to institutions in self-study and in addressing Criterion 4. Data resources and tools include the Student Outcomes Information Services (SOIS) questionnaire system, an outcomes-oriented alumni survey and the Institutional Performance Survey (IPS) intended to assess institutional functioning and campus climate. NCHEMS publications particularly relevant to self-study include *A Common Language for Postsecondary Accreditation: Categories and Definitions for Data Collection* (Dennis Jones and Melodie Cristal, 1985), and several publications on assessment (note those publications listed in the previous section), including *Information on Student Outcomes: How to Get It and How to Use It* (Peter Ewell, 1983). NCHEMS also provides direct consulting assistance to institutions undertaking self-study and offers a regular seminar series that includes topics on assessment and institutional effectiveness. (NCHEMS, PO Drawer P, Boulder CO 80302, 303/497-0301.)

Appendix C

Regional Accrediting Bodies 1994

☐ **MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION**
Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, the Republic of Panama

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education ..... Howard L. Simmons, Executive Director
3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104 ..... (215) 662-5606; FAX: (215) 662-5950

☐ **NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION**
Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education ..... Charles M. Cook, Director
209 Burlington Road, Bedford, MA 01730-1433 ..... (617) 271-0022; FAX: (617) 271-0950

Commission on Vocational, Technical and Career Institutions ..... Richard E. Mandeville, Director
209 Burlington Road, Bedford, MA 01730-1433 ..... (617) 271-0022; FAX: (617) 271-0950

☐ **NORTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION**
Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education ..... Patricia A. Thrash, Executive Director
30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400, Chicago, IL 60602 ..... (312) 263-0456; (800) 621-7440; FAX: (312) 263-7462

☐ **NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION**
Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington

Commission on Colleges ..... Joseph A. Malik, Executive Director
3700-B University Way N.E., Seattle, WA 98105 ..... (206) 543-0195; FAX: (206) 685-4621

☐ **SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION**
Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia

Commission on Colleges ..... James T. Rogers, Executive Director
1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097 ..... (404) 679-4500; (800) 248-7701; FAX: (404) 679-4558

Commission on Occupational Education Institutions ..... Harry L. Bowman, Executive Director
1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097 ..... (404) 679-4530; (800) 248-7701, ext. 530; FAX: (404) 679-4547

☐ **WESTERN ASSOCIATION**
California, Hawaii, Guam

Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities ..... Stephen S. Weiner, Executive Director
P.O. Box 9990, Mills College, Oakland, CA 94613-0990 ..... (510) 632-5000; FAX: (510) 632-8361

Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges ..... John C. Petersen, Executive Director
P.O. Box 70, 3060 Valencia Avenue, Aptos, CA 95003 ..... (408) 688-7575; FAX: (408) 688-1841

Appendix D

State Agencies in the North Central Region

Type of agency: (c) coordinating; (g) governing; (v) voluntary
(Jr.) agency deals with community, junior, and/or technical colleges offering programs of two years
(Sr.) agency deals with senior institutions offering programs of four or more years

ARIZONA

Arizona Community College Board (Jr.) (g)
Century Plaza, Suite 1220, 3225 North Central, Phoenix, AZ 85012 ..... (602) 255-4037

Arizona Board of Regents (Sr.) (g.)
2020 North Central Avenue, Suite 230, Phoenix, AZ 85004 ..... (602) 229-2500; FAX: (602) 229-2555

ARKANSAS

Arkansas Department of Higher Education (Jr. and Sr.) (c)
114 East Fifth Street, Little Rock, AR 72201 ..... (501) 324-9300; FAX: (501) 324-9308

COLORADO

Colorado Community College and Occupational Education System (Jr.) (g)
1391 North Speer Boulevard, Suite 600, Denver, CO 80204-2554 ..... (303) 620-4000; FAX (303) 825-4295

Commission on Higher Education (Sr.) (c)
Colorado Heritage Center, 1300 Broadway, 2nd Floor, Denver, CO 80203 ..... (303) 866-4034; FAX (303) 860-9750

ILLINOIS

Illinois Community College Board (Jr.) (c)
509 South Sixth, Room 400, Springfield, IL 62701 ..... (217) 785-0123

Illinois Board of Higher Education (Sr.) (c)
500 Reisch Building, 4 West Old Capitol Square, Springfield, IL 62701 ..... (217) 782-2551

INDIANA

Indiana Commission for Higher Education (Jr. and Sr.) (c)
101 West Ohio Street, Suite 550, Indianapolis, IN 46204-1909 ..... (317) 232-1900; (317) 232-1899

Indiana Commission for Postsecondary Proprietary Education (Jr. and Sr.) (c)
302 West Washington Street, #201, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2738 ..... (317) 232-1320

IOWA

Department of Education (Jr.) (g)
Grimes State Office Building, Des Moines, IA 50319-0146 ..... (515) 281-3599; FAX (515)281-6544

State Board of Regents (Sr.) (g)
Old State Historical Building, East 12th and Grand, Des Moines, IA 50319 ..... (515) 281-3934; FAX: (515) 281-6420

☐ **KANSAS**

Community Colleges State Department of Education (Jr.) (g)
120 S.E. Tenth Avenue, Topeka, KS 66612 ..... (913) 296-2635; FAX (913) 296-7933

Kansas Board of Regents (Sr.) (g)
Capitol Tower, 400 S.W. Eighth Street, #609, Topeka, KS 66603-3911 ..... (913) 296-3421; FAX: (913) 296-0983

☐ **MICHIGAN**

Department of Education (Jr. and Sr.) (c)
Higher Education Management Services, P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909 ..... (517) 373-3360; FAX (517) 335-4565

☐ **MINNESOTA**

Minnesota Community College System (Jr.) (c)
203 Capitol Square Building, 550 Cedar Street, St. Paul, MN 55101 ..... (612) 296-3990; FAX (612) 297-7024

State Board of Technical Colleges (Jr.) (c)
301 Capitol Square Building, 550 Cedar Street, St. Paul, MN 55101 ..... (612) 296-3387; FAX (612) 296-4217

Minnesota Higher Education Coordinating Board (Jr. and Sr.) (c)
Suite 400, Capitol Square Building, 550 Cedar Street, St. Paul, MN 55101 ..... (612) 296-9665; FAX (612) 296-3272

☐ **MISSOURI**

Coordinating Board for Higher Education (Jr. and Sr.) (c)
3515 Amazonas Drive, Jefferson City, MO 65109-5717 ..... (314) 751-2361; (314) 751-6635

☐ **NEBRASKA**

Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education (Jr. and Sr.) (v)
6th Floor, Capitol Bldg., 140 North 8th Street, Suite 300, P.O. Box 95005
Lincoln, NE 68509 ..... (402) 471-2847; FAX (402) 471-2886

☐ **NEW MEXICO**

Commission on Higher Education (Jr. and Sr.) (c)
1068 Cerrillos Road, Santa Fe, NM 87501-4295 ..... (505) 827-7393; FAX (505) 827-7392

☐ **NORTH DAKOTA**

North Dakota University System (Jr. and Sr.) (g)
600 East Boulevard, Bismarck, ND 58505-0154 ..... (701) 224-2960; FAX (701) 224-2961

☐ **OHIO**

Ohio Board of Regents (Jr. and Sr.) (c)
30 East Broad Street, 36th Floor, Columbus, OH 43266-0417 ..... (614) 466-0887; FAX (614) 466-5866

☐ **OKLAHOMA**

Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (Jr. and Sr.) (c)
500 Education Bldg., State Capitol Complex, Oklahoma City, OK 73105-4503 ..... (405) 524-9100; FAX (405) 524-9235

☐ **SOUTH DAKOTA**

Office of Adult Vocational and Technical Education (Jr.) (g)
Richard F. Kneip State Office Bldg., 700 Governors Drive, Pierre, SD 57501 ..... (605) 773-3423; FAX (605) 773-6139

Board of Regents (Sr.) (g)
207 East Capitol Avenue, Pierre, SD 57501-3159 ..... (605) 773-3455; FAX (605) 773-5320

☐ **WEST VIRGINIA**

Higher Education Central Office (Jr. and Sr.) (g)
1018 Kanawha Boulevard, East, Suite 700, Charleston, WV 25301
..... (304) 558-2177; FAX (304) 558-1011 (Marion) FAX (304) 558-3264 (Manning)

☐ **WISCONSIN**

Board of Vocational-Technical and Adult Education (Jr.) (g)
310 Price Place, P.O. Box 7874, Madison, WI 53707 ..... (608) 266-1770; FAX (608) 266-1285

University of Wisconsin System (Sr.) (g)
1720 Van Hise Hall, 1220 Linden Drive, Madison, WI 53706 ..... (608) 262-2321; FAX (608) 263-2046

☐ **WYOMING**

Wyoming Coordinating Council for Postsecondary Education (Jr. and Sr.) (c)
Wyoming Community College Commission
122 West 25th Street, 1st Floor West, Cheyenne, WY 82002 ..... (307) 777-7763; FAX (307) 777-6567

Appendix E

The Commission
1994

Chair: Jack L. Bottenfield, President, Eastern Wyoming College, Torrington, Wyoming

Vice Chair: Glenn A. Niemeyer, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Grand Valley State University, Hudsonville, Michigan

Members: Otto F. Bauer, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Omaha, Nebraska

Fred Cook, Retired Vice President-Human Resources, Mountain Bell, Denver, Colorado (Public Member)

John A. Cordova, President, South Mountain Community College, Phoenix, Arizona

Patsy Duran, Vice President for Development and Community Relations, Memorial Medical Center Foundation, Las Cruces, New Mexico (Public Member)

Maureen Fay, O.P., President, University of Detroit Mercy, Detroit, Michigan

Geraldene Felton, Professor and Dean, College of Nursing, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa

V. Burns Hargis, Attorney, Hartzog Conger Cason & Hargis, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (Public Member)

Margaret B. Lee, Vice President, Curriculum and Instruction, Oakton Community College, Des Plaines, Illinois

Dorothy I. MacConkey, President, Davis and Elkins College, Elkins, West Virginia

Ann B. Matasar, Amoco Distinguished Professor of International Business, Roosevelt University, Chicago, Illinois

Delbert M. Shankel, Acting Chancellor, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS

Richard K. Smith, Vice President for Financial Affairs, Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana

David L. Wee, Professor of English and Senior Tutor of the Paracollege, Saint Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota

Ex-Officio: Mary Ann Carroll, Dean, School of Graduate Studies, and Director of Research, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, Indiana (as NCA Vice President)

Appendices

Appendix F

The Commission Offices and Staff

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400, Chicago, Illinois 60602-2504
(312) 263-0456; (800) 621-7440; Fax: (312) 263-7462
Patricia A. Thrash, Executive Director

Professional staff	**phone**	**internet address**
Patricia A. Thrash, Executive Director	ext. 101	thrash@ncacihe.org
Steven D. Crow, Deputy Director	ext. 102	crow@ncacihe.org
Susan E. Van Kollenburg, Associate Director for Programs and Member Services	ext. 103	svk@ncacihe.org
Mary B. Breslin, B.V.M., Associate Director	ext. 107	breslin@ncacihe.org
Cecilia L. López, Associate Director	ext. 105	lopez@ncacihe.org
John B. Mason, Associate Director	ext. 104	mason@ncacihe.org
Stephen D. Spangehl, Associate Director	ext. 106	sds@ncacihe.org

Administrative staff	**phone**	**internet address**
Irma A. Bravin, Executive Assistant to the Executive Director	ext. 108	irma@ncacihe.org
Leslie H. Logan, Bookkeeper/Benefits Administrator	ext. 110	leslie@ncacihe.org
Loren R. Roseman, Information Systems Administrator	ext. 112	chris@ncacihe.org
Karen L. Solinski, Research Associate	ext. 111	karen@ncacihe.org

Support staff	**phone**	**internet address**
Denise Branch, Administrative Assistant (Receptionist)	ext. 100	denise@ncacihe.org
Joyce Gardner, Administrative Assistant (Evaluations)	ext. 114	joyce@ncacihe.org
Marisol Gomez, Administrative Assistant (Operations)	ext. 115	marisol@ncacihe.org
Leonilia Nakutis, Administrative Assistant (C-E Relations)	ext. 113	lil@ncacihe.org
Jeffrey Shimkus, Administrative Assistant (Secretary)	ext. 109	jeff@ncacihe.org
Sharon B. Ulmer, Administrative Assistant (Evaluations)	ext. 116	sharon@ncacihe.org
Andrea Williams, Administrative Assistant (Secretary)	ext.	andrea@ncacihe.org

Other inquiries	**phone**	**internet address**
General information	ext. 100	info@ncacihe.org
Information on the status of an institution	ext. 100	status@ncacihe.org
Information about meetings, programs, and publications	ext. 115 or 103	services@ncacihe.org
Publications orders	ext. 100	pubs@ncacihe.org
General C-E information	ext. 113	C-E@ncacihe.org
Invoices/reimbursements	ext. 110	accounting@ncacihe.org
Information on how to seek affiliation	ext. 111	candidacy@ncacihe.org
Complaints	ext. 198	complaints@ncacihe.org

Appendix G

The Professional Staff

Patricia A. Thrash, Executive Director

Patricia Thrash was named Executive Director of the Commission January 1, 1988. She joined the Commission staff in 1972 and was an Associate Director until assuming her present post. Patsy Thrash has a bachelor's degree in English from Delta State University in Mississippi and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Counseling and Higher Education from Northwestern University. She also holds a certificate from Harvard University's Institute for Educational Management. Before joining the Commission staff she was a dean and graduate faculty member at Northwestern University. She serves on the Executive Committee of the National Policy Board on Higher Education Institutional Accreditation. Thrash has written and spoken extensively about accreditation and has served on a number of national panels related to evaluation and non-traditional education.

Steven D. Crow, Deputy Director

Steven Crow was named Deputy Director of the Commission in September 1988, having served as an Associate Director from February-August 1988. He coordinates staff activities in institutional evaluation and serves as staff liaison to a number of institutions. He joined the Commission staff in 1982 as an Assistant Director. Crow earned his bachelor's degree from Lewis and Clark College in Oregon and his master's and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His academic field is History. Before joining the Commission staff Steve Crow served as an administrator and taught at Bowdoin College, Vanderbilt University, Bates College, and Kalamazoo College between 1970-81. He has written and spoken extensively about accreditation and the evaluation of international education efforts.

Susan E. Van Kollenburg, Associate Director for Programs and Member Services

Susan Van Kollenburg was named Associate Director for Programs and Member Services in August 1994. She is responsible for the Commission's publications, meetings, and programs and administers office operations and special projects. A graduate of Southern Illinois University-Carbondale with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Fine Arts, Van Kollenburg joined the Commission staff in November 1976 as Staff Assistant and Office Manager. She also served as Research Assistant, developing the Commission's research materials for its comprehensive self-study in 1980-81. Van Kollenburg was Executive Assistant to the Director from 1981-83, Coordinator of Operations from 1983-87, Assistant Director/Operations in 1987-88, and Associate Director/Operations from 1988-94. She serves as managing editor of the Commission's publications and regularly contributes to *Briefing*.

Mary B. Breslin, Associate Director

Mary B. Breslin, BVM, joined the staff as an Associate Director of the Commission in March 1993. She serves as staff liaison for a significant number of institutions and provides staff support for the Commission and its committees. Breslin holds a B.A. degree in Economics from Mundelein College, an M.A. degree in Economics from Marquette University, and a J.D. degree from Loyola University School of Law in Chicago. Her special interest is legal issues in higher education. Breslin held a series of positions at Mundelein College, serving as Assistant Business Manager and Part-time Instructor in Accounting and Corporate Finance, then Business Manager and Treasurer; 10 years as Vice President for Business Affairs and Treasurer, and six years as President, resigning shortly before Mundelein was merged with Loyola University. In 1991-92 Breslin served as Vice President for Finance at NAES (Native American Educational Services) College in Chicago. She has had extensive involvement with NACUBO, the Central Association of College and University Business

Officers, the Federation of Independent Illinois Colleges and Universities, the Associated Colleges of Illinois, and the Commission on Women in Higher Education of the American Council on Education. She also served as a member of KPMG Peat Marwick National Advisory Committee on Higher Education.

Cecilia L. López, Associate Director

Cecilia López joined the staff as an Associate Director of the Commission in February 1991. She serves as staff liaison for a significant number of institutions and provides staff support for the Commission and its committees. She has developed the Commission's relational data base. López holds B.A and M.A. degrees in English from Florida State University and a Ph.D. in Instructional Design and Learning from Arizona State University. Before joining the Commission staff, López was an Assistant Professor at Arizona State University in Phoenix. Previously she served as Director of the Writing Center and Instructor of English at Chabot College in Hayward, California, and as an Instructor of English at Florida A. and M. University in Tallahassee. López has published extensively on multicultural education and educational technology, and serves on the editorial board of *Educational Technology Research and Development* (ETR & D). She has spoken on a variety of topics, including planning, distance learning, external degree programs, technology, and assessment.

John B. Mason, Associate Director

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Stephen Spangehl joined the staff as an Associate Director of the Commission in July 1991. He serves as staff liaison for a significant number of institutions and provides staff support for the Commission and its committees. Spangehl holds B.A. and M.A. degrees in English from New York University and a Ph.D. in English Philology from the University of Pennsylvania. Before joining the Commission staff Spangehl was Director of the Interdisciplinary Program in Linguistics at the University of Louisville. Previously he also served as Director of the Liberal Studies Program, Assistant University Provost, and Co-Director of the Developmental Education Center at the University of Louisville. He was an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Akron in Ohio. He has written and spoken extensively on assessment, organizational behavior, general education, faculty development, and individualized instruction.

Appendix H

The Commission Calendar

1994		
November 2-4	Albuquerque	Commissioners' Meeting
1995		
January 23	Chicago	Review Committee Meeting
February 22-24	Chicago	Commissioners' Meeting
March 25	Chicago	Board of Directors' Meeting
March 5-28	Chicago	NCA Annual Meeting
March 27	Chicago	Commissioners' Meeting
June 26	Chicago	Review Committee Meeting
August 2-4	Chicago	Commissioners' Meeting
November 8-10	site in West Virginia	Commissioners' Meeting
1996		
January 22	Chicago	Review Committee Meeting
February 21-23	Chicago	Commissioners' Meeting
March 23	Chicago	Board of Directors' Meeting
March 24-27	Chicago	NCA Annual Meeting
March 25	Chicago	Commissioners' Meeting
June 24	Chicago	Review Committee Meeting
August 7-9	Chicago	Commissioners' Meeting
November 13-15	site to be determined	Commissioners' Meeting

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Appendices

Appendix I

Publications Available from the Commission

The following publications can be ordered from the Commission's Chicago office:

☐ *Handbook of Accreditation.* This document provides detailed information for institutions and evaluators on the evaluation/accreditation process as it is carried out by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. $15.00.

☐ *NCA Quarterly.* The Spring issue of this publication provides the directory of affiliated postsecondary institutions; the Summer issue provides the list of affiliated elementary and secondary schools; the Fall issue features articles of particular interest to persons in higher education; the Winter issue includes articles of particular interest to persons in elementary and secondary schools.

Themes of recent **Fall** issues are:

- ◊ "Rethinking Accreditation" (1987)
- ◊ "Issues in International Education" (1988)
- ◊ "The Role of Institutional Accreditation in Enhancing Quality" (1989)
- ◊ "Sharpening the Focus on Assessment: The Regionals and the NCA States" (1990)
- ◊ "Assessing Student Academic Achievement" (1991)
- ◊ "Accreditation and Values in Higher Education" (1992)
- ◊ "The First 100 Years of NCA: The Early Years" (1993)

Spring and Summer issues: $7.00; Fall and Winter issues: $5.00; Fall issues prior to 1991: $3.00.

☐ *A Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement.* This publication includes papers from CIHE Annual Meeting programs that provide advice and suggestions on self-study and address a wide variety of topics related to accreditation and institutional improvement. $12.00.

☐ *Briefing.* The Commission newsletter is published three times each year. *Briefing* is an invaluable resource for institutions and evaluators who need to be informed of Commission activities. Individual copies: $3.50. Annual Subscription: $10.00.

☐ *Accreditation of Postsecondary Institutions: An Overview.* This pamphlet provides general information about the accreditation of postsecondary institutions by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. $1.50.

☐ Guidelines on International Education Programs. The following working documents have been developed by Commission staff to assist institutions and teams in planning and evaluating new international education ventures: "Guidelines for Good Practice in Overseas International Education Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals" and "A Practical Guide for Organizing and Conducting International Evaluation Visits." No charge. Limit: one set.

All prices are subject to change.

Appendix J

Glossary of Commission Terminology

This glossary provides some brief, basic definitions for terms used throughout the *Handbook of Accreditation.* Readers should refer to the appropriate sections of the handbook for fuller discussion of these terms. The definitions apply to the work of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

Accreditation. The process by which a private, non-governmental body evaluates an educational institution or program of study and formally recognizes it as having met certain predetermined criteria or standards. The process involves initial and periodic self-study and evaluation by peers. Accreditation implies stimulation toward quality improvement beyond the minimum standards specified by the accrediting body.

Accreditation Association or Commission. A non-governmental body established to administer accrediting procedures. An accrediting body is formally acknowledged, or recognized, as being a reliable authority concerning the quality of education or training offered by educational institutions or programs by the U.S. Secretary of Education. It is a voluntary organization and not established by the federal or state governments or any government agency, department, or office. An accrediting body may be identified by scope (institutional or specialized program) or area (regional, interregional, or national).

Accreditation-Institutional. Institutional accreditation evaluates an entire institution and accredits it as a whole. Six regional and six national accrediting associations are recognized institutional accrediting agencies.

Accreditation-National. A type of institutional accreditation as provided by six national accrediting associations primarily for institutions with particular religious purposes, private trade and technical schools, private business colleges, and colleges focusing on health-related fields, as well as institutions offering programs primarily through distance delivery and home study.

Accreditation-Regional. A type of institutional accreditation as provided by nine recognized accrediting commissions of the six regional accrediting associations.

Accreditation-Specialized (also called Program Accreditation). A type of accreditation by a wide variety of specialized accrediting agencies provided for units, schools, or programs within a larger educational institution or for the sole program or area of concentration of an independent, specialized institution.

Accredited Status. Accreditation indicates to other institutions and to the public that an institution meets the Commission's General Institutional Requirements and Criteria for Accreditation. It also indicates the institution's commitment to the purposes and goals of the Association. Accreditation establishes the institution's membership in the Association.

Association. This refers to the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The Association is comprised of two independent commissions: the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education and the Commission on Schools.

Basic Institutional Data forms (BIDs). Each institution preparing for a comprehensive evaluation is required to complete the BIDs. The BIDs are forms that request quantitative information about certain areas of the institution,

such as library, finances, enrollments, and student body. The BIDs are sent to the institution by the Commission with the one-year reminder letter. The forms may be bound into the Self-Study Report as an appendix or submitted with the report as a separate document.

Candidacy. Candidacy, or Candidate for Accreditation, status is a preaccreditation status and, unlike accreditation, does not carry with it membership in the Association. Candidacy indicates that an institution fulfills the expectations of the Commission's Candidacy Program, which include meeting the General Institutional Requirements (GIRs). Candidacy gives an institution the opportunity to establish a formal, publicly-recognized relationship with the Association. It is the recommended approach to seeking accreditation for most non-affiliated institutions. An institution granted candidacy is progressing toward accreditation; candidacy does not automatically assure eventual accreditation.

Commission on Schools. One of two commissions of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The Commission on Schools accredits elementary, secondary, and postsecondary schools that do not award degrees in the nineteen state North Central region, as well as the Department of Defense Schools operated overseas for the children of American military and civilian personnel and the Navajo Nation schools. Its administrative offices are located in Tempe, Arizona.

Consultant-Evaluator Corps. An established corps of educators selected from member institutions who serve on Evaluation Teams, as Accreditation Review Council members, and as members of the Commission.

Criteria for Accreditation. The five Criteria for Accreditation provide the framework for judging an institution's eligibility for accreditation. The criteria are concerned with the clarity and appropriateness of the institution's purposes; the adequacy and effective organization of its human, financial, and physical resources to accomplishing its purposes; accomplishment of its educational and other purposes; its ability to continue accomplishment of its purposes and to strengthening its educational effectiveness; and its demonstration of integrity in its practices and relationships. Since all five criteria are critical to overall institutional effectiveness, meeting all five is required for accreditation. The criteria are intentionally general to ensure that accreditation decisions focus on the particulars of each institution's own purposes. However, Patterns of Evidence for each criterion suggest the types of evidence to be considered relevant in determining whether the criterion is met.

Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet (EVSS). The EVSS is a document developed by Commission staff for each institution undergoing evaluation. The EVSS includes the basic information about the visit and identifies the evaluation team members.

General Institutional Requirements (GIRs). The GIRs—as expressed in 24 specific requirements in the areas of Mission, Authorization, Governance, Faculty, Educational Programs, Finances, and Public Information—define the broadest parameters of the universe of institutions of higher education that can seek affiliation with the Commission. They establish a threshold of institutional development needed by an institution seeking to affiliate with the Commission. They reflect the Commission's basic expectations of all affiliated institutions of higher education, whether candidates or accredited.

Indicators. Specific "areas of exploration" that, taken as a group, guide an institution and Evaluation Team in determining whether a pattern of evidence exists which supports the conclusion that the institution satisfies a particular Criterion. The Commission lists, after each Criterion, those indicators that relate to a range of institutions, but institutions will supplement the lists with additional indicators appropriate to their specific or unique purposes or situations.

Legal authorization. The official act of a state department of education or other recognized agency having official authority certifying that a unit of educational organization (a school, institute, college, university or specialized program of studies) complies with the minimum legal requirements of such units. Legal authorization, granted by governmental agencies or the governing body of a school system, is distinguished from accreditation, which is accorded by voluntary non-governmental accrediting agencies.

Memorandum for the Record. A sanction applied to an institution that initiates a change without receiving prior Commission approval. The Memorandum, as a part of the institution's official file, is shared with the next team that visits the institution.

Pattern of evidence. The total body of findings, taken collectively, that supports an institution's claim or a team's evaluation that the institution meets any one of the Criteria for Accreditation. Whether a pattern of evidence exists to support an institution's or team's judgment concerning any particular Criterion depends on how convincing the individual indicators are, and on the breadth and variety of indicators available from which an overall Pattern can be inferred.

Probation. Probation is a public status signifying that conditions exist at an accredited institution that endanger its ability to meet the Commission's General Institutional Requirements and/or Criteria for Accreditation. An institution on probation must disclose this status whenever it refers to its North Central accreditation.

Professional Data Forms (PDFs). Commission forms that summarize basic information about the background and experience of Consultant-Evaluators. PDFs are sent to institutions when team members are proposed; they are sent to the Team Chair to provide assistance in making team assignments.

Record of Status and Scope (RSS). A public disclosure document developed for each affiliated institution that captures its relationship with the Commission. The RSS consists of two major components:

- ◇ the **Statement of Affiliation Status (SAS),** which summarizes the status of the institution with the Commission, and
- ◇ the **Statement of Institutional Scope and Activities (SISA),** which summarizes information provided by the institution in its Annual Report.

Self-study process. A formal, institution-wide, comprehensive process of self-examination that institutions consciously employ to prepare for scheduled comprehensive Commission evaluation. It is critical to recognize that self-study is a process, intended to nurture institutional improvement, and that it may result in a variety of internal reports, documents, recommendations, and other materials.

Self-Study Report. A document the institution prepares and sends to the Commission that describes the process the institution used to conduct its self-study process, what it learned from the process, and what it intends to do with its new knowledge. The report also functions as the institution's formal argument that it satisfies the five Criteria for Accreditation and the General Institutional Requirements. The completed Self-Study Report constitutes the institution's formal application for initial or continued candidacy or accreditation and forms the basis for the Commission's evaluation.

Appendix K

List of Commonly Used Abbreviations

APR	Assessment Plan Review Process
ARC	Accreditation Review Council
BID	Basic Institutional Data Form
C-E	Consultant-Evaluator
CIHE	Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
CoS	Commission on Schools
GIRs	General Institutional Requirements
EVSS	Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet
FTE	Full-time Equivalent
NCA	North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
NCAQ	*North Central Association Quarterly*
PDF	Professional Data Form
PDN	Public Disclosur Notice
PIF	Preliminary Information Form
RSS	Record of Status and Scope
SAS	Statement of Affiliation Status
SISA	Statement of Institutional Scope and Activities
USDE	United States Department of Education

Association	North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission	The Commission on Institutions of Higher Education. Also refers to the fifteen-member policy and decision-making body of the Commission.

Index of Commission Policies

The following is an index of Commission policies with references to where information related to each policy can be found in the *Handbook of Accreditation*. The number preceding each policy identifies its internal policy number in the Commission's policy book. The date of adoption is indicated in parentheses.

I. EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND THE COMMISSION

I.A. Policies on Insitutional Affiliation

I.A.1. Types of Affiliation (August 1992) 7

I.A.1a. Accreditation (August 1992) 7, 29

I.A.1b. Candidacy (August 1992) 7, 144

I.A.1c. General Institutional Requirements (August 1992) 20

I.A.2. Withdrawal of Application for Accredited or Candidate Status (August 1987) 7

I.A.3. Resignation from Affiliation with the Commission (August 1987) 8

I.A.4. Institutional Obligations of Affiliation (January 1983) 9

I.B. Policies on Accreditation Process

I.B.1. Mechanics of the Process

I.B.1a. Statement of Affiliation Status (January 1983) 12

I.B.1b. Communication with Institution (January 1983) 5

I.B.1c. Exit Session (January 1983) 99

I.B.1d. Distribution of the Team Report (January 1983) 106

I.B.1e Institutional Response to Team Report (January 1983) 107

I.B.1f. Review of Team Recommendation (January 1983) 107

I.B.1f(1). Readers' Panel (January 1983) 108

I.B.1f(2). Review Committee (January 1983) 109

I.B.1g. Response to Review Committee Recommendation (January 1983) 110

I.B.1h. Other Recommendations to the Commission (January 1983) 141

I.B.1h(1). Evaluators' Panel (January 1983) 141

I.B.1h(2). Commission Staff Recommendations (January 1983) 141

I.B.1i. Institutional Use of Review Processes (January 1983) 107

I.B.1j. Commission Action (November 1991) 110

I.B.1k. Mail Ballot (February 1994) 110

I.B.2. Sanctions of the Process

I.B.2a. Memorandum for the Record (October 1988) 11

I.B.2b. Probation (August 1988) 11

I.B.2c. Commission Withdrawal of Affiliation (January 1983) 8

I.B.3. Institutional Response to Sanctions

I.B.3a. Reapplication of Institution Denied Candidacy (January 1983) 7

I.B.3b. Reapplication of Institution Denied Accreditation (January 1983) 7

I.B.3c. Reapplication After Commission Withdrawal of Candidacy or Accreditation (October 1983) 8

I.B.3d. Grounds for Appeals 9

I.B.3d(1). Institutional Change During Appeal Period (January 1983) 138

I.C. Policies Regarding Institutional Dynamics

I.C.1. Commission Right to Reconsider Affiliation (February 1993) 8, 135

I.C.2. Institutional Changes Requiring Commission Approval Prior to Their Initiation (February 1993) 135

I.C.2a. Changes Requiring On-Site Visits (February 1993) 136

I.C.2b. Changes Requiring Evaluators' Panel or On-Site Visits (February 1993) 136, 137

I.C.2c. Changes Requiring Staff Recommendations, Evaluators' Panels, or On-Site Visits (February 1993) 136

I.C.3. Institutional Changes Requiring On-Site Commission Review After Their Initiation (February 1993) 137

I.C.4. Institutional Activities Requiring A Staff Report To The Commission (February 1993) 137

I.C.5. Institutional Circumstances That Might Require Commission Monitoring (February 1993) 137

I.C.6 Separately Accreditable Institutions (January 1983) 7

I.C.7. Accreditation of Closing Institutions 138

I.C.8. Transfer of Credits (October 1988) 25

I.D. Policies on Institutional Financial Obligations

I.D.1. Institutional Dues (February 1990) 10

I.D.2. Refund of Evaluation Fees (February 1990) 90

I.D.3. Non-Payment of Dues and Fees By Affiliated Institutions (February 1990) 11

I.D.4. Debts to the Commission (February 1990) 8

II. THE COMMISSION AND CONSULTANT-EVALUATORS

II.A. Policies on Consultant-Evaluators

II.A.1. Eligibility and Selection of Consultant-Evaluators (January 1983) 88

II.A.2. Terms of Appointments (February 1994) 84

II.A.3. Required Professional Development (February 1994) 84

II.A.4. Completion of Service on the CE Corps (February 1994) 84

II.A.5. Termination of Service on the C-E Corps (February 1994) 83, 84

II.A.6. Team Chair Corps 85

II.A.7. Availability of Consultant-Evaluator's Professional Data Forms to Others (January 1983) ..... OR*

II.A.8. Commitment to Equity and Diversity in the C-E Corps (August 1990) 88

II.B. Policies on Visiting Teams

II.B.1. Size of Team (February 1993) ..... OR*
II.B.2. Institution Review of Team (August 1990) 90
II.B.3. Conflict of Interest (March 1988) 86
II.B.4. Commissioners' Participation on Teams (June 1988) 87
II.B.5. Observers on Teams (January 1983) 91
II.B.6. Terminating A Visit (February 1993) 92

II.C. Policies on Consultant Service

II.C.1. Recommendation of Consultants (February 1984) ..... OR*
II.C.2. Consultant-Evaluator's Serving as Institutional Consultants (January 1983) 86
II.C.3. Generalist Service (January 1983) 129

III. THE COMMISSION AND OTHER AGENCIES

III.A. Policies Concerning Other Accrediting Agencies

III.A.1. Professional Accreditation (January 1983) 1
III.A.2. Relationship Between the Commission and other Institutional or Specialized Accrediting Agencies (February 1986) 128
III.A.3. Requirements of Institutions Holding Dual Institutional Accreditation (February 1988) 1

III.B. Policies Concerning Governmental Agencies

III.B.1. Relation with U.S. Government (February 1984) 6, 159
III.B.2. Relations with States, Coordinating Boards, and Higher Boards (February 1986) 6, 91, 159

III.C. Policies Concerning Specialized Non-Accrediting Agencies

III.C.1. Unions (January 1983) 57
III.C.2. Intercollegiate Athletics (August 1984) 59
III.C.3. Endorsement of Policies of Other Agencies (January 1983) 56

IV. THE COMMISSION AND THE PUBLIC

IV.A. Policies on Public Disclosure

IV.A.1. Public Meetings of the Commission (January 1983) ..... OR*
IV.A.2. Publication of Institutional Affiliation Status by the Commission (January 1983) 159
IV.A.3. Public Disclosure of Team Report (January 1983) 160, 161
IV.A.4. Public Disclosure of Reasons for Probation (August 1990) 12
IV.A.5. Disclosure by an Institution of Its Statement of Affiliation Status (April 1983) 161
IV.A.6. Commission Disclosure of an Institution's Affiliation Status (October 1989) 159
IV.A.7. Public Disclosure Notice (June 1989) 160

IV.B. Policies on Complaints Against Affiliated Institutions

IV.B.1. Complaint Against an Affiliated Institution (February 1990) 162

IV.B.2. Institution's Advertising and Recuitment Materials (August 1990) 161

V. THE COMMISSION AND ITS STAFF

V.A. Policies on Staff Relation with Commission

V.A.1. Staff Relation With Commission (January 1983) 5, 71, 95

V.A.2. Staff Conflict of Interest (November 1991) 5

V.B. Policies on Staff Relation to Institution

V.B.1. Staff Relation to Institution (January 1983) 5

OR* Indicates a policy not mentioned in the publications. The policy is available from the Commission office on request.

Index

This index provides a general guide to key points of information in the *Handbook of Accreditation.* It is not an exhaustive list of every reference to each item, but rather it identifies where pertinent information can be found.

Abbreviations, List of Commonly Used 188
Access, Equity, and Diversity: Commission Statement on 55
Accreditation
- Institutional Accreditation 1
- Specialized Accreditation 1
- Voluntary Accreditation 1

Accreditation Review Council Members 87
Accreditation Status 7
- Criteria and the Patterns in the Accreditation Process, The 30
- Deciding between Initial Candidacy and Initial Accreditation 144
- Purposes of Self-Study in Accreditation 69
- Reapplication of an Institution Denied Accreditation 7
- Self-Study Process in Accreditation, The 69

Advertising, Institutional 161
Affiliation with the Commission 7
- Commission Reconsideration of Affiliation 8
- Commission Withdrawal of Affiliation 8
- Forms of Affiliation 7
- Institutional Obligations of Affiliation 9
- Institutional Resignation from Affiliation 8
- Institutional Withdrawal of Application for Affiliation 7
- Publication of Affiliation by the Commission 159
- Publication of Affiliation by the Institution 160
- Reapplication Following Withdrawal of Affiliation 8
- Record of Status and Scope, The 12
- Statement of Affiliation Status (SAS), The 12

Annual Meeting, The 5, 71
Annual Reports, Institutional 10
Appeal of a Commission Decision to Deny or Withdraw Affiliation 9
Appeals Panel, Association 87
Assessment of Student Academic Achievement, The Commission's Initiative on 151
- Assessment Plan Review Process, The 156
  - Format Requirements for the Written Plan to be Submitted to the APR Process 156
- Commission Statement on Assessment of Student Academic Achievement 151
- Evaluation Team Review of the Assessment Plan 157
- Five Evaluative Questions for Assessment Plans 156
- Hallmarks of Successful Programs to Assess Student Academic Achievement 152
- How the Assessment Initiative Relates to the Criteria for Accreditation 152
- How Teams Respond to an Institution's Progress on Assessment 157
- Resources on Assessment ..... see Appendix B
- Role of Assessment in Criterion Three, The 45
- Timetable for Implementation of the Assessment Initiative 154
- Why the Commission Emphasizes the Assessment Plan 155

Authorization, GIRs Related to 20
Basic Institutional Data Forms 77

Biennial Review Process, Relationship of the Plan and Timetable to the 147
Budgeting for the Evaluation Process 91
Calendar, The Commission 183
Candidacy Program 103
Candidacy Status 7
Deciding between Initial Candidacy and Initial Accreditation 144
Expectations for All Candidate Institutions 144, 146, 147
Institutional Preparation of the Self-Study Report for Candidacy 147
Overview of the Candidacy Program 144
Pattern of Evidence in the Candidacy Program 148
Reapplication of an Institution Denied Candidacy 7
Team Report in the Candidacy Program, The 148
Change, Institutional 135
Defining Institutional Change 135
Evaluating Institutional Change 138
Evaluation Visit for Approval of Institutional Change 141
Evaluators' Panel for Approval of Institutional Change 141
Information and Documentation to Support a Request for Institutional Change 138
Institutional Report for a Focused Evaluation for Institutional Change 125
Processes for Approval of Institutional Change Requests 141
Staff Approval of Institutional Change 141
Timing the Submission of a Request for Institutional Change 138
Closing Institutions 137, 138
Commission Action 110
Commission Reconsideration of Affiliation 8
Commission Withdrawal of Affiliation 8
Most Recent Commission Action Section of the SAS 15
Public Distribution of the Team Report by the Commission 160
Publication of Affiliation by the Commission 159
Publication of Commission Action by the Institution 161
Review Processes and Commission Action 107, 127
Commission Disclosure 159
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, The 2
Affiliation with the Commission 7
Brief History of the Commission, A 2
Commission Calendar, The 183
Commission Fee Schedule for 1994-95 Evaluation Processes 123
Commission Offices and Staff, The 180
Commission Policies, Index of 189
Commission Publications 5, 72, 184
Glossary of Commission Terminology 185
Information to the Public 6
Members of the Commission 87, 179
Mission of the Commission, The 4
Rules of Procedure of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education 163
Commission-Mandated Focused Evaluation, Institutional Report for a 125
Commission Staff and Services, The 5
Commission Staff Liaison 5, 71
Commission Staff's Role during the Team Visit, The 95
Communication, Establishing Lines of 93
Complaints against Affiliated Institutions 162
Comprehensive Evaluations 9, 111
Confirmation/Advisory Visits 129
Consultant-Evaluator Corps, The 81

Avoiding Conflict of Interest 86
C-Es as "Generalists" rather than Specialists 82
Consultant-Evaluators and Outside Consulting 86
Experience and Training of the Consultant-Evaluator Corps 84
Joining the Consultant-Evaluator Corps 88
Other Roles of Consultant-Evaluators 87
The Role and Responsibilities of Consultant-Evaluators 81
Terms of Service for Consultant-Evaluators 84
Contingency Reports Section of the SAS 17
Criteria for Accreditation 29, 33, 103
Criteria and the Patterns in the Accreditation Process, The 30
Criteria for Accreditation, How the Assessment Initiative Relates to the 152
Criterion Five 35, 54-60
Institutional Integrity 54, 56
Role of Diversity and Equity in This Criterion, The 55
Statements of Good Practice Promulgated by Other Organizations 56
Criterion Four 35, 50-54
Criterion One 33, 36-39
Criterion Three 34, 44-50
Role of Assessment in This Criterion, The 45
Role of General Education in This Criterion, The 45
Criterion Two 33, 39-44
Relationship between the GIRs and the Criteria, The 27
Data Gathering and Evaluation 97
Dates for the Visit, Choosing the 89
Debts to the Commission 8
Disclosure (See Public Disclosure)
Diversity (See Equity and Diversity)
Draft Team Report, The 105
Response to the Draft Team Report 106
Dues and Fees, Payment of 10
Commission Fee Schedule for 1994-95 Evaluation Processes 123
Educational Program, GIRs Related to 23
Equity, and Diversity, Statement on Access, ... 55
Role of Diversity and Equity in Criterion Five, The 55
Evaluation Process
Budgeting for the Evaluation Process 91
Initiating the Evaluation Process 89
Materials for the Evaluation Process 92, 118
Overview of the Evaluation Process, An 114
Peer Review in the Evaluation Process 81
Sample Timeline for the Evaluation Process, A 111
Evaluation Teams
Evaluation Team Review of the Assessment Plan 157
Expectations of Evaluation Teams 82
Institution and Team Response to the Review Committee Recommendations 110
Scheduling Visits and Team Invitations 85
Selection of the Evaluation Team, The 90
Special Emphases Evaluation Teams 80
Evaluation Visit, The 93
Analyzing the Materials for the Visit 92
Announcing the Visit 89
Choosing the Dates for the Visit 95
Commission Staff's Role during the Team Visit, The 95

Conducting the Evaluation Visit ... 95
Data Gathering and Evaluation ... 97
Evaluation Visit for Approval of Institutional Change ... 141
Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet, The ... 90, 122
Institutional Preparations for the Evaluation Visit ... 89
Length of the Evaluation Visit ... 95
Logistical Arrangements ... 91
Making the Most of the Evaluation Visit ... 92
Materials Available to the Evaluation Team on Campus ... 77
Materials Sent to the Evaluation Team and the Commission Staff Liaison ... 77
Rescheduling the Evaluation Visit ... 90
Scheduling Visits and Team Invitations ... 85
Team Planning for the Visit ... 93
Team Expenses ... 95
Team Meetings ... 96, 98
Team Preparations for a Focused Evaluation ... 126
Team Preparations for the Visit ... 93
Team Recommendation and Rationale ... 105
Evaluations, Types of
Confirmation/Advisory Visits ... 129
Comprehensive Evaluations ... 9, 111
Focused Evaluations ... 10, 125
Generalis Visits ... 129
Interregional Evaluations ... 128
International Visits ... 129
Joint Visits ... 128
Pre-Visits by the Team Chair ... 127
Sequential Evaluations ... 128
Evaluators' Panel Process for Approval of Institutional Change ... 141
Executive Officer, Meetings with the ... 97
Exit Session, The ... 98
Expenses, Team ... 95
Faculty, GIRs Related to ... 21
Fees (See Dues and Fees)
Final Team Report, The ... 106
Finances, GIRs Related to ... 25
Five Evaluative Questions for Assessment Plans ... 156
Focused Evaluations ... 10, 125
Institutional Report for a Commission-Mandated Focused Evaluation ... 125
Institutional Report for a Focused Evaluation for Institutional Change ... 125
Team Preparations for a Focused Evaluation ... 126
Focused Visits Required on the SAS ... 17
Forms of Affiliation ... 7
General Education
Defining General Education ... 23
Documenting the Centrality of General Education ... 24
General Education in Unique Institutional Contexts ... 46
Role of General Education in Criterion Three, The ... 45
Ways to Describe a General Education Program ... 45
General Institutional Requirements, The ... 19, 20, 103
Defining General Education ... 23
Documenting the Centrality of General Education ... 24
General Institutional Requirements in the Self-Study Report, The ... 77
GIRs on Authorization ... 20

GIRs on Educational Program 23
GIRs on Faculty 21
GIRs on Finances 25
GIRs on Governance 20
GIRs on Mission 20
GIRs on Public Information 26
Purpose of the General Institutional Requirements 19
Relationship between the GIRs and the Criteria, The 27
Relationship between the GIRs and the Explication, The 19
Relationship between the GIRs and the Preliminary Information Form, The 19
Generalist Visits 129
Glossary of Commission Terminology 185
Good Practice Promulgated by Other Organizations, Statements of 56
Good Practice: A Resource Guide, Principles of 61
Governance, GIRs Related to 20
Governmental Agencies (See Relations with Other Agencies)
Hallmarks of Successful Programs to Assess Student Academic Achievement 152
Highest Degree Awarded Section of the SAS 14
History of the Commission, A Brief 2
Indicators
Patterns and Indicators: An Illustration 29
What Patterns and Indicators Mean for Evaluation Teams 31
What Patterns and Indicators Mean for Institutions 30
Institutional Accreditation 1
Institutional Annual Report 10
Institutional Change (See Change, Institutional)
Institutional Dynamics, Commission Policies Regarding 135
Integrity in the Accreditation Process, The Role of Institutional 56
International Education Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals, Principles of Good Practice in Overseas 130
International Visits 129
Interregional Visits 128
Joint Visits 128
Limited Courses Not Part of Degree Programs 142
Materials for the Evaluation Process
Analyzing the Materials for the Visit 93
Materials Available to the Evaluation Team on Campus 77
Materials for the Evaluation Process 77, 92, 118
Other Materials Required for the Evaluation 77
Memorandum for the Record 11
Mission, GIRs Related to 20
Mission of the Commission, The 4
Monitoring Reports Required Section of the SAS 16
Next Comprehensive Evaluation Section of the SAS 17
New Degree Sites Section of the SAS 15
North Central Association, The 1
Obligations of Affiliation 9
Observers on Teams 91
Patterns of Evidence 37, 42, 48, 52, 58
Contexts Shaping the Patterns of Evidence 32
Criteria and the Patterns in the Accreditation Process, The 30
Introduction of the Patterns of Evidence, The 29
Patterns and Indicators: An Illustration 29
What Patterns and Indicators Mean for Evaluation Teams 31
What Patterns and Indicators Mean for Institutions 30

Working with the Patterns of Evidence 29
Peer Review in the Evaluation Process 81
Periodic Review Cycle, The 9
Planning Checklist for the Team Chairperson, A 119
Planning in Criterion Four, The Role of 51
Policies, Index of Commission 189
Pre-Visits 127
Preliminary Information Form (PIF) Process 143
Procedure for Submitting a PIF 143
Relationship between the GIRs and the Preliminary Information Form, The 19
Staff Analysis of the PIF 143
Presidential Leadership and Support in the Self-Study Process 70
Principles of Good Practice in Overseas International Education Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals 130
Principles of Good Practice: A Resource Guide 61
Probation, Policy on 11
Progress Reports Required Section of the SAS 16
Public Disclosure
Commission Disclosure 159
Commission's Expanding View of Public Disclosure, The 159
GIRs on Public Information 26
Institutional Disclosure 160
Public Disclosure Notice 160
Public Distribution of the Team Report by the Commission 160
Public Distribution of the Team Report by the Institution 161
Publication of Affiliation by the Commission 159
Publication of Affiliation by the Institution 160
Publication of Commission Action by the Institution 161
Publications Available from the Commission 5, 72, 184
Readers' Panel Process, The 108
Reapplication Following Withdrawal of Affiliation 8
Reapplication of an Institution Denied Accreditation 7
Reapplication of an Institution Denied Candidacy 7
Record of Status and Scope, The 12
Role of the RSS in the Evaluation Process, The 13
Sample RSS, A 13
Statement of Affiliation Status (SAS), The 12
Statement of Institutional Scope and Activities (SISA), The 12, 96, 105
Refund of Student Charges, Policy Guidelines for 65
Regional Accrediting Bodies 175
Relations with Other Agencies
Relations with Governmental Agencies 6
Sharing Information with Other Agencies 159
Statements of Good Practice Promulgated by Other Organizations 56
Reports
Contingency Reports Required 17
Institutional Annual Reports 10
Institutional Report for a Commission-Mandated Focused Evaluation 125
Institutional Report for a Focused Evaluation for Institutional Change 125
Monitoring Reports Required 16
Progress Reports Required 16
Reports 9
Rescheduling the Evaluation Visit 90
Resignation from Affiliation, Institutional 8
Resources on Topics in Higher Education 168

Response to the Draft Team Report 106
Response to the Review Committee Recommendations, Institution and Team 110
Response to the Team Report, Institutional 107
Review Committee Process, The 109
Review Committee Recommendations, Institution and Team Response to the 110
Review Process, Choosing the Appropriate 107
Review Processes and Commission Action 127
Review Processes Leading to Commission Action 107
Rules of Procedure of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education 163
Sanctions 11
Self-Study Coordinator 70
Self-Study Process in Accreditation, The 69
Conducting an Effective Self-Study Process 72
Planning an Effective Self-Study Process 72
Preparing for and Conducting the Self-Study 70
Purposes of Self-Study in Accreditation 69
Resources on Self-Study and Evaluation ..... see Appendix B
Self-Study Steering Committee 71
"Special Emphases" Self-Study Option, The 78
What the Commission Expects in Every Self-Study 69
Self-Study Report, The 74
Audiences for the Self-Study Report, The 74
Body of the Self-Study Report 75
General Institutional Requirements in the Self-Study Report, The 77
Institutional Preparation of the Self-Study Report for Candidacy 147
Introduction to the Self-Study Report 75
Purposes of the Self-Study Report, The 74
Special Emphases Self-Study Report, The 79
Structure of the Self-Study Report, The 74
Summary of the Self-Study Report 76
Sequential Visits 128
Special Emphases Self-Study Option, The 78
Determining Whether an Institution Should Do a Special Emphases Self-Study 79
Purpose of the Special Emphases Option 78
Selecting the Areas of Special Emphases 79
Special Emphases Evaluation Teams 80
Special Emphases Self-Study Report, The 79
Staff Approval of the Special Emphases Self-Study 79
Specialized Accreditation 1
Staff Assistance, Commission 5
Commission Offices and Staff, The 180
Commission Staff and Services, The 5
Commission Staff Liaison 71
Professional Staff of the Commission, The 181
Staff Analysis of the PIF 143
Staff Approval of Institutional Change 141
Staff Approval of the Special Emphases Self-Study 79
State Agencies in the North Central Region 176
Statement of Affiliation Status (SAS), The 12
Contingency Reports Required Section 17
Highest Degree Awarded Section 14
Monitoring Reports Required Section 16
Most Recent Commission Action Section 15
New Degree Sites Section 15

Next Comprehensive Evaluation Section 17
Other Visits Required Section 17
Progress Reports Required Section 16
Status Section 14
Stipulations Section 15
Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status 96, 105, 120
Statement of Institutional Scope and Activities (SISA), The 12, 96, 105
Statement on Access, Equity, and Diversity 55
Statement on Assessment of Student Academic Achievement 151
Status Section of the SAS 14
Stipulations Section of the SAS 15
Student Academic Achievement (See Assessment of Student Academic Achievement)
Team Chair Corps, The 85
Team Chairperson, A Planning Checklist for the 119
Team (See Evaluation Team)
Team Report, The 101
Audiences for the Team Report 101
Draft Team Report, The 105
Final Team Report, The 106
Institutional Response to the Team Report 107
Public Distribution of the Team Report by the Commission 160
Preparing and Submitting the Team Report 105
Public Distribution of the Team Report by the Institution 161
Response to the Draft Team Report 106
Structure of the Team Report 101
Team Report in the Candidacy Program, The 148
Writing Responsibilities for the Team Report 101
Team Visit (See Evaluation Visit)
Visit (See Evaluation Visit)
Voluntary Accreditation 1
Withdrawal of Application for Affiliation, Institutional 7
Withdrawal of Affiliation, Reapplication Following 8
Worksheet for the Statement of Affiliation Status 96, 105

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